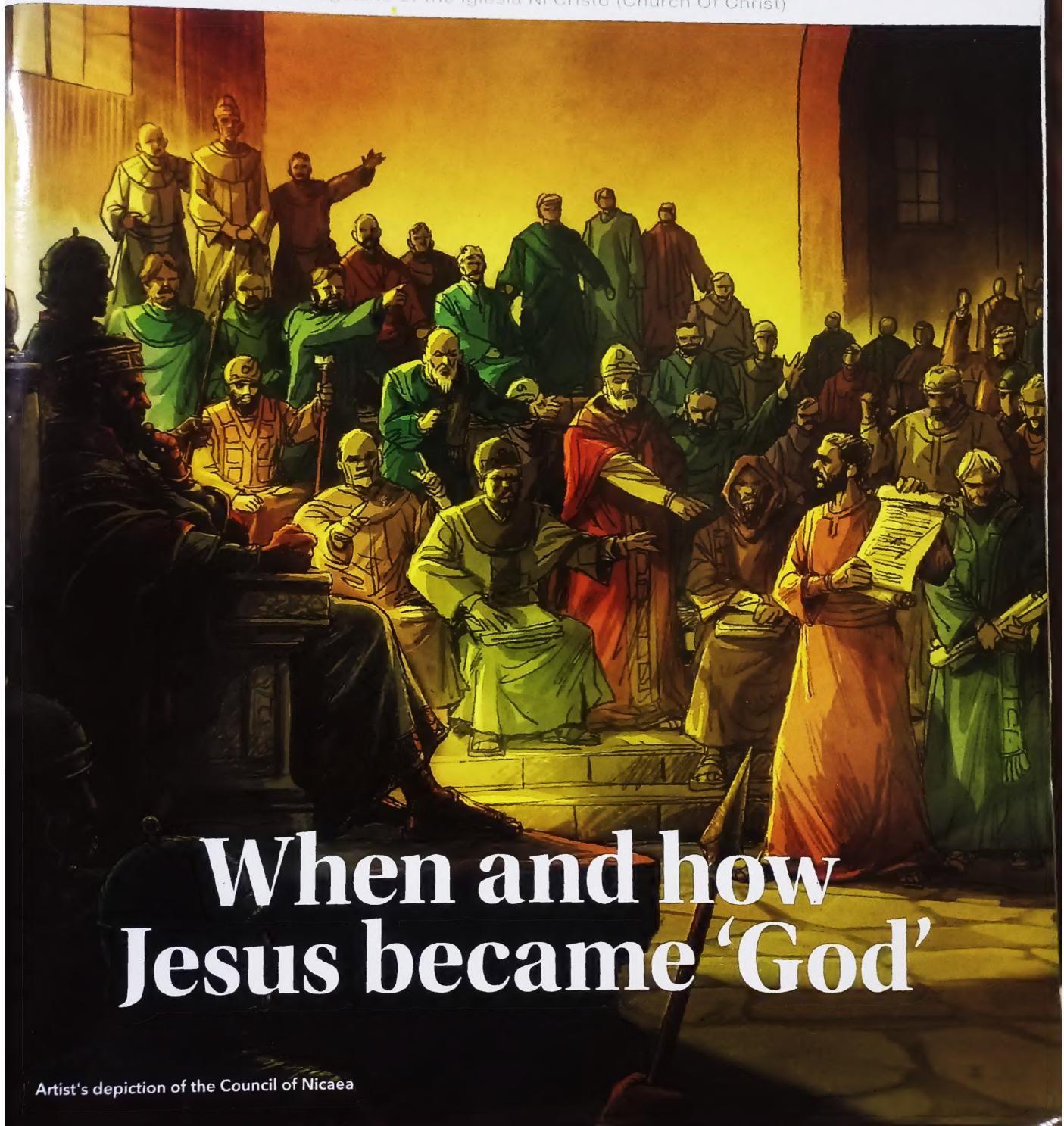


PASUGO

APRIL 2024

GOD'S MESSAGE

The Magazine of the Iglesia Ni Cristo (Church Of Christ)



When and how Jesus became 'God'

Artist's depiction of the Council of Nicaea

Seeking God's help and loving care

Running away from a problem
is a race we cannot win;
For wherever we go, problems follow
even to the core or the earth's farthest rim.

This should not surprise us at all
for many times have we been told;
The world we live in—like it or not—
is really never a worry-free world.

When we first saw the light of day
it was with a cry and not with a smile;
Then off we went on our lifelong journey
with tears marking every mile.

Truly so for life is not a bed of roses
nor it is always a sunshiny morn;
At times we get entangled in thickets,
or find ourselves in the eye of a storm.

Many a time have we set out for a walk—
singing our way down the road;
But the farther we go, we find ourselves—
shoulders sagging with so heavy a load.

Try as we may to shake off the burden
then run as fast as we could;
But the load has a way of clinging on to us—
letting itself be dragged down the road.

"Face it squarely," a voice within you whispers.
"Confront it. And be done. Don't run.
The sooner you meet the problem head-on,
the better. You deserve to be happy, not glum."

"Don't ever have any second thought, though.
Give yourself a good fight.
Soon you'll see the brightening dawn
as daylight conquers the night."

"Yes, you ought to realize by now,"
Continues the voice from within;
"Running away from a problem
is a race you cannot win."

"And when the problem proves too much—
for you to carry or bear;
Instead of losing hope and giving up,
seek God's help and loving care."

NICANOR P. TIOSEN
NEGROS OCCIDENTAL, PHILIPPINES



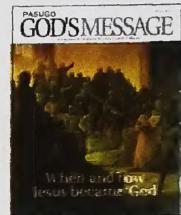
Food donation drive. Brethren from the Barcelona Congregation donate food items to non-governmental organization, Gra de Blat (Story on p. 7).

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Brother Novo Malgapo



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FAQs

Why doesn't the Church Of Christ observe Easter?

THE EASTER Sunday celebration is not from the Bible and cannot be traced back to the first-century Christians:

"EASTER ... The word does not properly occur in Scripture ... There is no trace of Easter celebration in the NT [New Testament] ..." (*The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, Vol. 2, p. 889)

The name "Easter" itself is pagan, and the practices in celebration of Easter—such as Easter eggs and Easter rabbits—are of pagan origins. *The Catholic Encyclopedia* explains:

"Easter.—The English term, according to the Ven. Bede (De temporum ratione, I, v), relates to Eōstre, a Teutonic goddess of the rising light of day and spring, which deity, however, is otherwise unknown ..."

PECULIAR CUSTOMS OF EASTER TIME ...

"2. Easter Eggs.—Because the use of eggs was forbidden during Lent, they were brought to the table on Easter Day, coloured red to symbolize the Easter joy. This custom is found not only in the Latin but also in the Oriental Churches. The symbolic meaning of a new creation of mankind by Jesus risen from the dead was probably an invention of later times. The custom may have its origin in paganism, for a great many pagan customs, celebrating the return of spring, gravitated to Easter. The egg is the emblem of the germinating life of early spring. ..."

"3. The Easter Rabbit lays the eggs, for which reason they are hidden in a nest or in the garden. The rabbit is a pagan symbol and has always been an emblem of fertility ..." (Vol. 5, pp. 224, 227)

The Feast of Easter is unbiblical and of pagan origin, and has nothing to do whatsoever with our Lord Jesus Christ, and so, the Church Of Christ neither celebrates it nor partake of any festivities associated with it. True Christians are instructed to "Give up living like pagans with their good-for-nothing notions" because that is not how they learned Christ (Eph. 4:18, 20 New English Bible).

What the true Christians commemorate is Christ's death through the Holy Supper that He instituted to remember Him (Matt. 26:26-28; Luke 22:19-20). This the apostles obeyed and implemented in the Church:

"For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.' For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." (I Cor. 11:23-26 New International Version) ●

PASUGO
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Editorial

The origin of the 'Christ-is-God' doctrine

ALMOST 1,700 YEARS AGO, an article or profession of faith that Jesus Christ is God was conceived. That statement is known as the Nicene Creed, named after the Catholic council that proclaimed it—the Council of Nicaea held in the fourth century A.D.:

"Thus, for example, it was not until 325 A.D., at the Council of Nicaea, that the Church defined for us that it was an article of faith that Jesus is truly God." (*Discourses on the Apostles' Creed*, p. 206)*

That it took an ecumenical council and more than two centuries after the Bible was completed for the Catholic Church to declare a "point of orthodoxy that the Son was 'true God'" (*The Doctrine of God*, p. 59) underscores the fact that Christ's deity is not in any way taught in the Holy Scriptures. Historical records, in fact, show that the formulation of this 'Christ-is-God' doctrine—which culminated in Nicaea—went through a long and complicated process.

Christ being God was not how the true Christians who lived during the time of Jesus here on earth and of His apostles regarded and believed Him to be. Apostle Peter taught that Jesus was "a Man attested by God" (Acts 2:22 New King James Version). Apostle Paul described the Savior as "*the Man Christ Jesus*" (I Tim. 2:5 NKJV). The early Christians then never regarded Christ as God since for them, "*there is one God, the Father*" (I Cor. 8:6 NKJV).

Their belief that Christ is man and not God was what they learned from the Lord Himself. Christ proclaims that He is "a **Man** who has told ... the **truth** which [He] heard from God" (John 8:40 NKJV).* It was also Christ Who teaches that His Father is "the only true God" (John 17:3, 1 NKJV; 20:17).

Even some Catholic authorities attest that Jesus being God cannot be read in the Gospels:

"Jesus is never called God in the Synoptic Gospels ... Even the fourth Gospel never portrays Jesus as saying specifically that he is God. ... Thus, there is no reason to think that Jesus was called God in the earliest layers of New Testament ..." (*Jesus: God & Man*, p. 30)*

Religious historians wrote that the so-called Apostolic Fathers, regarded as "personal disciples of the Apostles" commonly "conceived of [Christ] primarily as the divine revealer of the knowledge of the true God" (*A History of the Christian Church*, p. 37)*—clearly, Christ Who is not God and is distinct from God. An American scholar also noted that "by the end of the period of the Apostolic Fathers there was no belief in a preexistent Trinity. ... No mention is made of a preexistent Christ" (*The Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, pp. 190–191).*

A Catholic priest, Joseph Pohle, admitted that "Some modern writers hold that even the *Didache*, or 'Teachings of the Twelve Apostles' ... contains no formal profession of faith in the Divinity of Jesus Christ ..." (*The Divine Trinity*, p. 150).*

One telling evidence that the belief about Christ being God was not widely accepted until the fourth century was the opposition that arose against it:

"... as late as the fourth century there were those within Christianity who ... still argued against the divinity of the preexistent Christ ..." (*The Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, pp. 306–307)*

One of the prominent individuals who protested against Christ's divinity was Arius, a priest or presbyter who asked what were described as "disturbing questions":

"Could Christ, the Son, have as much divinity as His Father, who had created Him? Was He not less divine? Was Jesus, whose teaching and life on earth was such an inspiration to them, less godlike than the Father?"

"... Furthermore, Arius said that if God the Father and the Son were both divine, then there were two gods, which meant that Christianity was not a monotheistic religion." (*Ancient and Medieval History*, p. 394)*

The one who answered Arius's questions was Alexander, bishop of Alexandria, who "delivered a series of sermons maintaining strongly that Jesus Christ was Eternal God in the form of a man and that beliefs to the contrary were heretical" (*When Jesus Became God*, p. 56).*

But Arius remained unfazed; he refuted Alexander's sermon:

"One of the presbyters, Arius, an ascetic scholar and popular preacher, attacked the sermon because he believed ... that Christ was of different (heteros) essence or substance than the Father. Because of the virtue of His life and His obedience to God's will, Christ was to be considered divine. But Arius believed that Christ was a being, created out of nothing, subordinate to the Father and of a different essence from the Father. He was not coequal, coeternal or consubstantial with the Father. To Arius He was divine but not deity." (*Christianity Through the Centuries*, pp. 143–144)*

The controversy consequently "escalated sharply" and the "anti-Arians drew up a creed—a Confession of Orthodoxy—which was laid before Arius and his supporters with a demand that they sign it. When they refused, the council excommunicated them and banished them from Alexandria" (*When Jesus Became God*, pp. 56–57).*

The dispute did not end with the expulsion of Arius and of his supporters. In fact, "the local controversy had now gone regional and, according to theoretical experts, had the potential to spread throughout the Mediterranean world. Highly respected leaders of the Church had taken strongly opposed positions" (*Ibid.*, p. 46).*

This development prompted the Roman Emperor, Constantine, to intervene, although his real motive was not so much to resolve a theological issue as to save his empire from breaking apart:

"Constantine was far too canny to attempt to outlaw his religious opponents, who still constituted a majority of Roman citizens. But there was nothing to prevent him from favoring the Church as his predecessors had favored the old religion. ... His true goal, beyond favoring his co-religionists, was to unite the empire's diverse, quarreling peoples in one huge spiritual fellowship." (*Ibid.*, p. 46)*

Heeding the advice of Hosius of Cordova, Constantine then convened the Council of Nicaea, presided over it, and even shouldered its expenses:

"Constantine then called a council of the bishops of the Church to work out a solution to the dispute. This council met at Nicaea in the early summer of 325. Three hundred bishops of the church were present, but less than ten were from the Western section of the Empire. The Emperor presided over the council and paid its expenses. For the first time the Church found itself dominated by the political leadership of the head of the state." (*Christianity Through the Centuries*, p. 143)*

Religious historians pointed out that although "Constantine had basically no understanding whatsoever of the questions that were being asked in Greek theology" (*A Short History of Christian Doctrine*, p. 51), he "insisted that all bishops who had been present should endorse a new creed that confirmed Christ as God and condemned Arius. Anyone who did not sign this document was to be excommunicated and exiled." (*The Jesus Establishment*, p. 173)*

Refusal to accept this profession of faith that Christ is God was regarded not only as a heresy but also a crime against the state:

"Once this 'Nicene Creed' had been publicly signed by all the bishops and promulgated by Constantine, it became the official creed for all Christians. To deny the divinity of Christ in any way was to put oneself outside of the Christian community and was a crime against the state." (*The Emerging Church*, p. 110)*

Sadly, as a religious historian lamented, the Catholic Church, with its declaration that Christ is God, "condemned what was right and retained what was false" (*The Jesus Establishment*, pp. 175–176).

That a government official, like Constantine, connived with false religious preachers in introducing a false doctrine should not come as a surprise. Apostle Paul, before his death, forewarned the early Christians, thus:

"I know that after I leave, fierce wolves will come among you, and they will not spare the flock. The time will come when some men from your own group will tell lies to lead the believers away after them." (Acts 20:29–30 Good News Bible)*

These 'wolves' refer both to false prophets (Matt. 7:15) and to government officials:

"The government officials are like wolves tearing apart the animals they have killed. They commit murder in order to get rich." (Ezek. 22:27 GNB)

Apostle Paul early on expressed his apprehension on how the early Christians' minds "may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ":

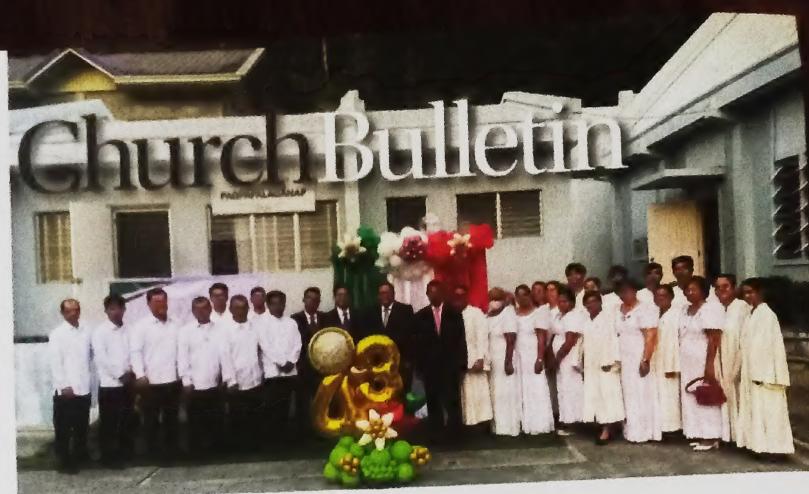
"But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted—you may well put up with it!" (II Cor. 11:3-4 NKJV)*

Those who would corrupt the minds of the true Christians about Christ would preach "another Jesus whom [the apostles] have not preached"—a Jesus who is God, as opposed to the "man Christ Jesus" Whom Paul and his fellow apostles taught and believed as such by the early Christians.

Lest our services to God be deemed unworthy and rendered useless, we should not follow man-made teachings (Matt. 15:9), such as the Christ-is-God doctrine—a "different gospel" that must be rejected (Gal. 1:6-9). To receive everlasting life, we ought to believe and stand firm in the truth taught by Christ, Who, in His prayer to the Father says, "**this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God**" (John 17:3,1 NKJV).*

* *Emphases added*

Donnui C. Lavendin
Editor-in-Chief



NCC Congregation in Urdaneta, Pangasinan celebrates 43rd anniversary

In celebration of the 43rd anniversary of the Local Congregation of NCC, Ecclesiastical District of Urdaneta City, Pangasinan, the brethren showed their further intensified efforts in propagating the gospel led by their resident ministerial worker, Brother Bien Paul L. Mapili.

NCC stands for Northern Cement Corporation, one of the known Filipino-owned cement companies. Its main factory lies within the city of Sison, Pangasinan (ncc.com.ph). The 43-year-old local congregation adopted its current name as the house of worship is situated at NCC Road. From being an extension of the Local Congregation of Pozorrubio, NCC (formerly the Sugcong Congregation) was approved by the Church Administration to be elevated as a local congregation on February 22, 1981.

"The brethren in NCC are always eager in participating in the Church's works, especially in the propagation of God's words, moved by their faith that it is the will of God that people come to know the truth in order to be saved," conveyed the resident ministerial worker.

First among its series of activities for the anniversary commemoration was the *Pasugo* distribution on February 20, 2024. The brethren

handed out copies of *Pasugo: God's Message* magazine in different parts of Barangay Inmalog, Sison, Pangasinan.

Three days after, the said congregation held an evangelical mission officiated at by the resident ministerial worker.

In his preaching, Brother Mapili proved, through the Bible, that life on earth is fragile. Thus, one must use it in order to gain that which is everlasting.

Chenie Coloma, one of those who were given a *Pasugo* magazine, and was invited to the evangelical mission by Brother Rubenson Ballesteros, organist, shared her insights. "Unlike the previous gatherings I've attended in other religions, in the Church Of Christ, whenever the preacher would ask a question, it is the Bible which would always give the answer. Plus, here in this Church, everything is organized and everyone made me feel very welcome."

Brother Lolito Candelario Sr., 66, head deacon and a pioneer member in the NCC Congregation, affirmed, "My faith and love for the Church are what move me to continue fulfilling my duty. I vow to do so until my last breath." (Marck Angelo Delos Reyes)



New Zealand establishes 1 congregation, 1 extension, 3 GWS

As more people continue joining the Iglesia Ni Cristo (Church Of Christ) in New Zealand, a local congregation, an extension, and three group worship services (GWS) were recently established. The inaugural gatherings were all officiated at by Brother Dennis S. Dahunan, supervising minister of New Zealand District, except for the most recent one whom Brother Jonas Medrano, assistant district supervising minister, led.

With these developments, the district leadership can better attend to the spiritual needs of the brethren in the said places. "We firmly believe that the continuous expansion of the one true Church Of Christ here in New Zealand is a work of God," Brother Dahunan said. "Since its establishment on September 22, 2017, the New Zealand Ecclesiastical District has now grown into a total of 41 congregations and several extensions and GWS all over New Zealand, the Kingdom of Tonga, and Fiji Islands."

On February 22, 2024, the inaugural worship service of the Fitzgerald Extension was held at a rented hall in Deaf Society Hall, Fitzgerald Ave., Christchurch City Center in Christchurch.

Brother Arnel Del Rosario, resident minister, shared that the brethren "were very happy and excited when they heard about the establishment of Fitzgerald Extension because that means that the place of worship will be closer to them."

Two days after, on February 24, the inaugural worship service for the Kerikeri GWS took place at the Cornerstone Whare Karakia o Manako, Kerikeri Rd. in Kerikeri.

Prior to its establishment, the brethren used to travel an hour and a half to reach the house of worship of the Whangārei Congregation to attend worship services. On behalf of the brethren, Brother Demmie Garcia, resident minister, promised to "be more steadfast in the faith and continue serving God until the end."

Meanwhile, from being organized as a GWS, the brethren in Dunedin gained local congregation status. They conducted the local congregation's inaugural worship service on March 7, 2024 at the Coronation Hall, Gordon Road in Mosgiel, Dunedin City. Brother Eraño Roxas, resident minister, observed, "The brethren are so devoted in attending worship services because they firmly believe that they will receive the Holy Spirit that will strengthen their faith. This is the reason they never forsake such holy obligations to God no matter what."

In another development, members of the Nelson GWS held the inaugural worship service on March 14 at the Wakapuaka Memorial Hall along 460 Wakapuaka Road in Wakapuaka, a township north of Nelson. They now conduct regular worship services at a rented hall in Trafalgar Street, The Wood, a suburb of Nelson. Brother Dante Ariola Jr. is the assigned resident minister.

On March 21, the inaugural worship service of the Westport GWS took place at the Carters Beach Sunday Market Hall in Carters Beach, a suburb of Westport. Brother Arnel Del Rosario, resident minister, recalled, "When there was no Westport GWS yet, the brethren here traveled for more than 100 kilometers for them to attend the worship service in the West

Coast Congregation. Regardless of the danger in traveling and the severe weather condition, they did not forsake the worship service." (Ronnie Mutya and Roxanne Rosquita)

Two congregations in Zamboanga Sibugay hold INC Giving events

Under the Church's INC Giving project, two local congregations in the Ecclesiastical District of Zamboanga Sibugay held outreach activities towards the end of March 2024.

On March 23, with the aim of keeping the cleanliness of their community, brethren from the Local Congregation of Naga, gathered in groups, went early to Naga Municipal Fish Port in Brgy. Taytay Manubo, Naga, Zamboanga Sibugay to sweep the surroundings clean.

Brother Bryan Angelo Ibasco, resident minister, emphasized, "It is hoped that such activity brought awareness to our fellow citizens residing in the area to maintain cleanliness of the environment."

Seven days later, March 30, the Guintoloan Group Worship Service (GWS) of Upper Sulitan Congregation sponsored a medical mission held at its chapel compound facilitated by the officers of the Christian



NGO in Spain benefits from Barcelona Congregation's food donation drive

"¡Muchísimas gracias a la Iglesia De Cristo! En este momento, estoy muy agradecida, muy contenta y emocionada porque la Iglesia ha venido a dar muchas ayudas. ¡Muchísimas gracias! [Thank you very much to the Church Of Christ! At this moment, I am so grateful, so content and emotional because the Church has come to give much help. Thank you very much!]"

Thus expressed Janette Corda, a volunteer leader of Gra de Blat, a non-governmental organization which aims to alleviate the food shortage and other scarcity in the said community of Spain (gradeblat.com), after the food donation drive conducted by the Local Congregation of Barcelona, Ecclesiastical District of Spain on March 9, 2024, spearheaded by the *Buklod* organization.

Brother Kelvin Martinez, *Buklod* president, said, "Through the unity of the brethren in Barcelona, we were able to do things according to plan. We hope that we were able to help our fellowmen who lack basic needs, especially food."

The brethren donated basic food parcels to the Gra de Blat, which include rice, cooking oil,

Medical Dental and Paramedical Society (CMDPS).

Free medicines and services were provided, including medical check-ups and haircut. (Ronnie Mutya)



canned food, pasta, tomato sauce, milk, among many more.

"Despite the rainy weather, I am so happy that I was able to participate today. I really did my best to be united with my

brothers and sisters [in the faith] here so that we can help those in need," declared Sister Emercedita Secuban, a choir member.

(Marck Angelo Delos Reyes and Noemi Jimenez)



First baptism in Port Harcourt, Nigeria conducted

Through the missionary efforts of the brethren from the Okwudor Extension, Nigeria, which is under the supervision of the Ecclesiastical District of Northern Africa, more Nigerians were added to the Church as the first-ever baptism in Port Harcourt, Rivers State in Nigeria was held on March 13, 2024.

The historic event was officiated at by Brother Albert Alaan Jr., assistant district supervising minister. Prior to the prospective members' baptism, he reminded them what they were already taught during their doctrinal instructions about the importance of becoming members of the Church Of Christ and remaining active therein for them to be saved on Judgment Day.

"I am so thankful to God that more of my fellow Nigerians have decided to become members of the Church," conveyed Brother Obinna Ukoma, resident ministerial worker of Okwudor Extension, who was

instrumental in leading the Bible studies on doctrines of the newly baptized members.

One of them, Brother Abraham Iboro Ezekiel, shared what convinced him the most to join the Church. "I was fascinated by the doctrine regarding the Messenger of God in these last days. I firmly believe that Brother Felix Y. Manalo was sent by God in order for man to know the truth."

"I promise that I will be active in the worship service and help out in the work of propagation," said another Nigerian native who was baptized, Brother Samuel Tonni. (Marck Angelo Delos Reyes)

For more Church news around the globe, visit www.pasugo.com.ph





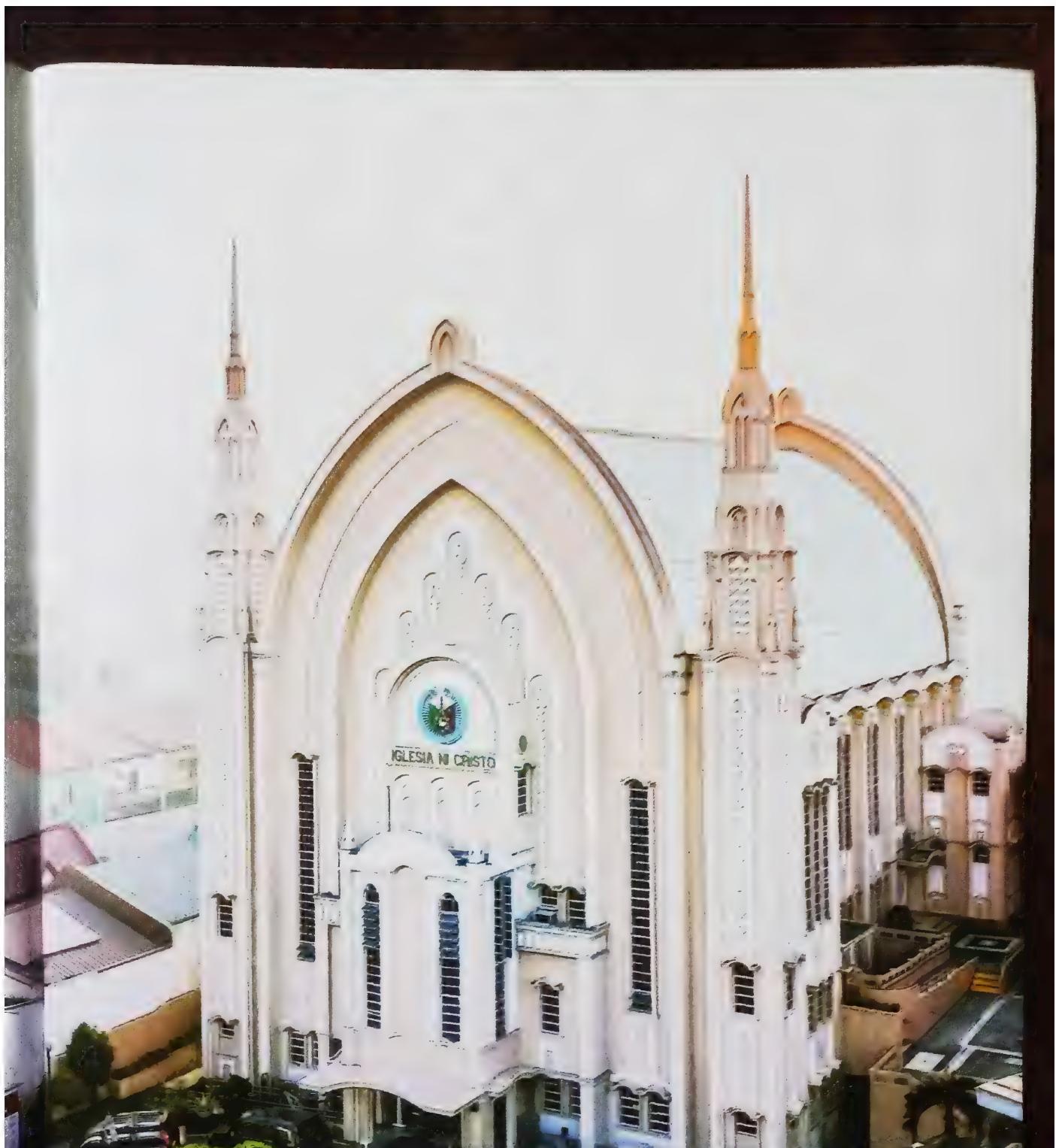
Hardships are Temporary, but God's Love is Everlasting

ON MARCH 3, 2024, members of the *Iglesia Ni Cristo* (Church Of Christ) in the Local Congregation of Batasan Hills 1, Ecclesiastical District of Quezon City were blessed to be able to attend a solemn gathering officiated by the Executive Minister, Brother Eduardo V. Manalo. This was about five years since the last time he visited their local congregation, in November 2019. The worship service brought renewed strength and inspiration to the brethren, bolstering their faith in God.

From the Bible, the Executive Minister emphasized the importance of leading a righteous way of life by adhering to God's teachings. He reminded the brethren to stay focused on the right path and maintain their obedience to God's words as they traverse this world that is filled with temptations. He taught them to not let the wickedness of the world sway them and to continue upholding their God-given duties.

"The biblical reminders preached by our Presiding Elder uplifted our spirits, instilling hope and fostering a strong faith





BATASAN HILLS 1

Quezon City

APRIL 2024 • PARUGO: GOD'S MESSAGE



in God to help us persevere through difficult times," said Sister Gerri Anna Baja, a finance officer and KADIWA local officer, whose mother was diagnosed with cancer in 2016 and passed away in 2023. She recalled regarding her harrowing experience, "It was painful, but it helped make our family even more united and our bond with each other stronger. Most importantly, we became closer to God because we relied on our prayers to Him for solace and comfort."

Losing a parent is indeed saddening and difficult, yet Sister Anna was able to persevere through grief by relying on prayers to God. She also draws strength from the support of friends, family, and relatives. She shared, "God gives me a positive outlook in life with His holy words. I promise to continue fulfilling my Church duties and to actively participate in Church activities launched by the Church Administration." She remains committed to attending worship services, for she firmly believes that by devotedly

attending these holy gatherings, God has been providing her with everything she needs to confront life's challenges.

Another insight that Sister Anna reflected on is how true Christian parents pass on their faith to their children and grandchildren, as mentioned by the



Sister Gerri Anna Baja (second from right) and family when her mother (center) was still alive

Executive Minister in his homily. She expressed, "Before my mother passed away, she had instilled the true faith in me and my siblings. This faith serves as our anchor, enabling us to stay in the right path, remain in our conviction, and feel even more inspired to fulfill our Church responsibilities."

Similarly resilient is Brother Jose Coñesco, a deacon, who faced and overcame challenges while remaining devoted to worshiping God. Brother Jose suffered from an illness which lasted for a year, hampering his mobility and requiring him to be assisted when going places. He was also not able to work during this challenging time. He recalled, "I didn't know where to get our daily needs. I didn't know how we could cope." Despite all these, he never lost faith that the Almighty Father will provide him with strength, guidance, and support to help him carry on.

When the Executive Minister reminded the brethren to always place their trust in the Father, especially in times of difficulties, Brother Jose reminisced how he remained steadfast in his faith in God. He shared, "Whenever I feel lost and don't know what to do, I pause for a while and pray. I've done that countless times already—I gather my family and we pray." Despite his condition, he always attends worship services to glorify God. He also firmly believed in the greatness of God's healing power through the anointing of oil for the sick.

The Church Administration never grows tired of motivating the Church members to be prayerful and to continue relying on God. Brother

Jose said, "Because of God's immeasurable mercy, our prayers were answered. I believe that it was God Who provided for our daily needs and for my medication. Eventually, I recovered from my illness, resumed my livelihood as a tricycle driver as if I never got sick, and I continued fulfilling my Church duties diligently."

The Executive Minister also pointed out in his preaching that true Christians patiently wait for God to answer their prayers. Instead of measuring how long it takes for God to respond, Church Of Christ members are taught to reflect on how many times He has rescued them from dangers and how many times He has made them feel secure. This is what Sister Eden De Jesus, a choir member, clearly remembered from the preaching of Brother Eduardo Manalo.

Sister Eden faced numerous challenges during the pandemic. She was tested positive for Covid-19 four times, one of which happened while she was giving birth to her youngest son. Sister Eden narrated, "It was difficult for me, as a mother, to be separated from my newborn baby. I was in the isolation room, and my baby was kept away from me. He was placed in the intensive care unit after medical personnel discovered that I had tested positive. I kept on praying to God for my baby's safety."

With the ordeal she went through, Sister Eden chose to entrust everything to God. She continued, "My husband and I encouraged each other and prayed always to strengthen our faith. We begged God to help us overcome that trial and not fall



Brother Jose Coñesco
(far left) and family



Sister Eden De Jesus and her husband

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into depression or hopelessness, not just for myself but also for my family." Even during those challenging moments, she remained grateful to God that she was cleared of any symptoms despite being tested as Covid-positive.

Surely enough, Sister Eden's prayers had not been in vain. Her family, including her newborn son and two older sons, did not contract the virus. They are thankful to God for His protection. To this day, her faith remains firm and unwavering, as she believes that God has performed miracles in her life for as many times as she could remember. "I learned from Brother Eduardo Manalo's Bible-based preaching that we, God's chosen ones, should never be sad or distressed when there are many trials in our life. We should always remember that this world is not

our true home; we are mere sojourners here. Our true home is with God and His Son, Jesus Christ, there in the Holy City, where we will dwell on the day of our salvation." ●

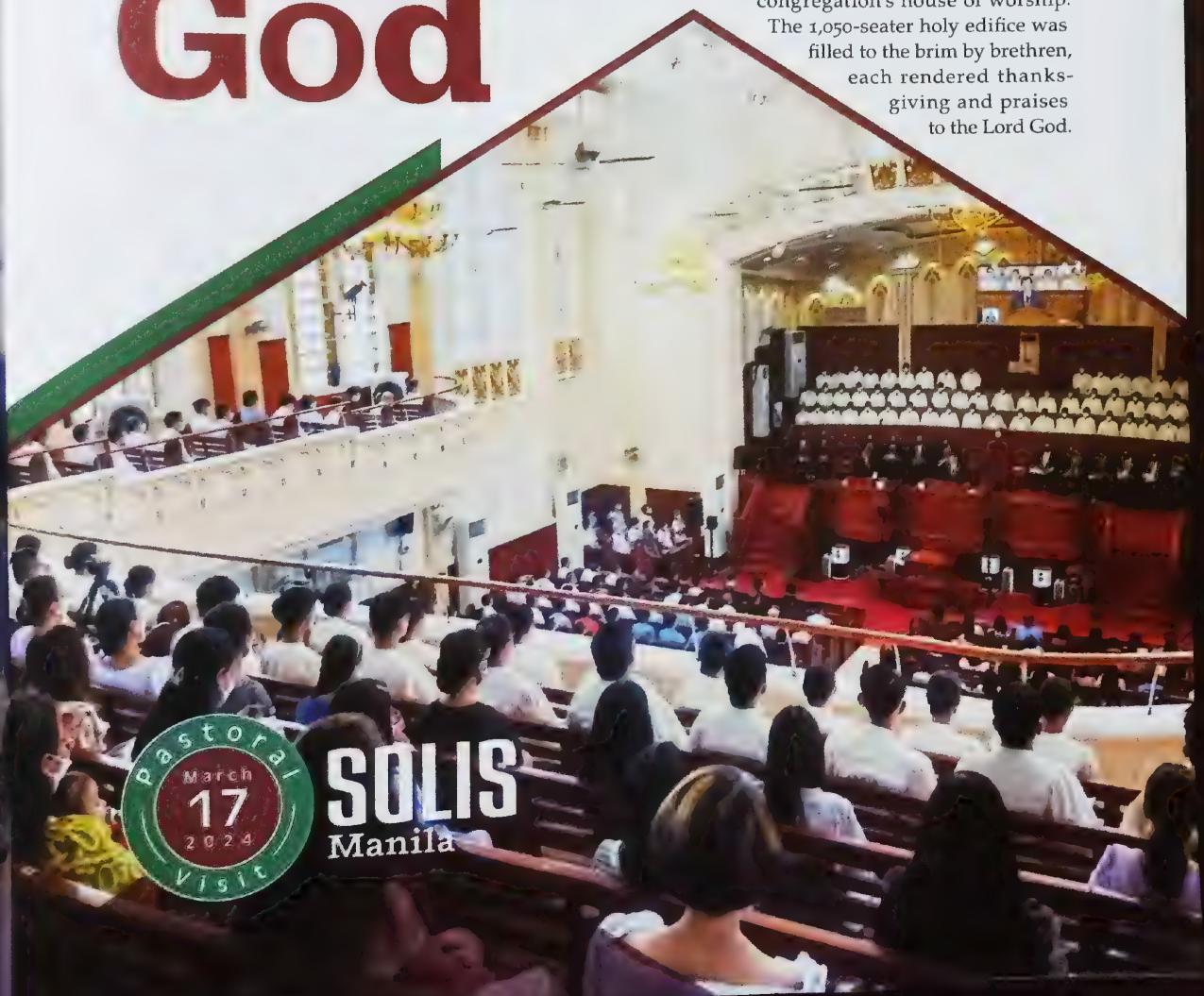
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Instilling *the* Importance of Trusting God



THE CELEBRATION for the diamond anniversary of the Local Congregation of Solis, Ecclesiastical District of Manila in the Philippines, continues to further edify the brethren. As after a couple of months after it reached 75 years on January 6, 2024, the Executive Minister of the *Iglesia Ni Cristo* (Church Of Christ), Brother Eduardo V. Manalo, officiated at a worship service on March 17 at the congregation's house of worship. The 1,050-seater holy edifice was filled to the brim by brethren, each rendered thanksgiving and praises to the Lord God.



Sister Ana Myreen Lizarondo (right) together with her family prior to her husband's passing

The seven and a half decades of blessings is a milestone that manifests God's faithful love for the congregation. The brethren were able to uphold their firm faith through the years. The guidance of God's teachings that the Church Administration consistently teaches made them adamant in their conviction.

During the worship service, the opening prayer was led by Brother Reynaldo G. Arizala, Jr., assistant district supervising minister, then the Executive Minister preached a Bible-based lesson. He emphasized the importance of putting God first and trusting Him completely.

This is so timely amid the prevalence of misleading ideologies posted mostly on social media. Church members must not be swayed by such. Instead, they must place their trust in the Almighty God. This can be expressed through prayers. By drawing near to God, they will be shown the path towards a spiritual life worthy of attaining salvation.

Pondering on the lesson taught, Sister Ana Myreen Lizarondo, a finance officer, easily related what she and her household experienced at the start of this year. She shared, "My husband died on January 26, a day before my birthday, due to heart attack. Despite what happened, as what the Executive Minister taught, we should be solid in our faith and remain calm whatever trials may come into our lives because God will never leave us, continue to pray to Him, and remember that He will never give us a trial that He knows we cannot face."

Life will always have its troubles, yet one thing must be certain for God's chosen ones—to serve God no matter what. Such conviction is what Brother Glenn Cheung, a head deacon, exhibits as he holds on to the lessons continuously being taught by the Church Administration. He narrated, "Since we are still here living in this world, more and more obstacles will come to us. That's why we should always remember what the Executive



Brother Glenn Cheung

"Brothers and sisters, we should have courage in God's strength. We can do everything. We are not alone; God is with us. Only temporary difficulties and obstacles will end if we are patient and trust in God with the help of our Lord." — Brother Glenn Cheung
Brother Glenn Cheung, a member of the first members know that the tribulation is the start of completing their race towards salvation. This conviction is further bolstered as God will always be there to help them. The life experiences of Brother Noel Tiangco, a choir leader, affirm this. Three decades back, he shared with a fellow member how God's help manifested in his life. "I was only 12 years old before my father passed away, my entire family knew that I was already on the verge of death because of the condition of my father," recalled Brother Noel. As the eldest child of the family, a huge responsibility was placed on Brother Noel's shoulders. "It was a challenging period to lose a parent and then, be tasked with the duty of leading the family. I prayed persistently and continued fulfilling all of my duties as an officer in the Church."

Most importantly, he and his family recognized that his father's passing was a test from God. He truly believed that the Almighty Father will not give them trials they could not handle. Brother Noel said, "We were reminded that life has to go on for my mother and for us, our entire family. My father has finished his race as an active officer and member of the Church Of Christ. Now, we must ensure that we will also do the same."

Concluding his homily, Brother Eduardo Manalo encouraged the faithful to uphold their devotional prayers to God for He is the only One who will be able to truly help them strive and prevail over hindrances. As they run towards the finish line and complete the race God has set before them, they were exhorted to hold on to their calling to be saved on Judgment Day. The Executive Minister also prayed to God to provide the brethren with the things they need in this life, most importantly His spiritual blessings.

Brother Romer D. Galang led the closing prayer while Brother Glicerio P. Santos IV led the prayer for the voluntary offerings. The benediction was said by Brother Bienvenido C. Santiago.



Brother Noel Tiangco



The faith of the members was the reason the Local Congregation of Solis was able to reach another milestone. This was done with the enduring help of the Almighty God Who has never allowed the Church to weaken, but only grow in strength.

This faith was even more edified through the pastoral visitation of the Executive Minister, which has left nothing but additional inspiration to the Church members to always be a light to the world—to shine as members of the true Church Of Christ. ❶

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Religious Articles

When and how Jesus became 'God'

*The events that led to the concoction
of the teaching on Christ's supposed deity*

By MANDY A. NEPOMUCENO

An illustration of the Council of Nicaea by Brother Novo Malgape

CHRIST IS NOT GOD. He never was, is, or will become one. The only one true God taught in the Bible is none other than the Almighty Father in heaven. His Son, Jesus Christ Himself explicitly affirms this truth, thus:

"After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed: 'Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. ... Now this is

eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent'" (John 17:1, 3 New International Version)

Jesus identifies the Father, to Whom He prayed, as the only true God. His words leave no room for ambiguity. Christ also delineates the distinction between Himself and the true God by acknowledging thus: "Jesus Christ, whom You have sent." This underscores

“
After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed: ‘Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. ... Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent’.
”

John 17:1, 3 New International Version

that Christ, the One sent by the only true God, cannot be the only true God Who sent Him. It will be absurd to suggest that He was talking to Himself in these biblical verses and that He sent Himself.

Despite Jesus Christ's unequivocal teaching, the doctrine that "Christ is not God" is viewed by many as unorthodox if not heretical. Instead of embracing Christ's teachings, such people claim that their assertion that Christ is God is the original Christian belief—that it has been held by Christians from the very beginning. However, this claim is not only contrary to historical evidence but, more importantly, to the very teachings of the Bible. A look-back in history reveals how the Christ-is-God doctrine germinated and, later on, gained widespread acceptance among those identifying themselves as Christians. Nevertheless, the fact remains that this doctrine did not come from Christ and His apostles, and, thus, not an authentic Christian belief.

A gradual and complex process

According to some historians, the development of the doctrine about Christ's alleged divinity "was a gradual, complex process" (p. 48).¹ This process unfolded so gradually and with complexity that it was not until the fourth century, hundreds of years after Christ's time on earth and the era of His apostles, that the said belief was finalized and subsequently declared as a dogma of what passed then as the true Christian faith.

This clearly refutes the claim that the Christ-is-God doctrine has been already existent and embraced or accepted by Christians from the time of Jesus. Instead, historical records indicate that there were events that happened during the post-apostolic history of Christianity that significantly influenced the creation and the evolution of this doctrine. This period was characterized by persecution against and defamation of Christians perpetrated by non-believers, that is, heathens or pagans. False narratives were fabri-

cated, and Christians were unjustly accused of various crimes, while their beliefs were grossly misrepresented (pp. 15-16).²

Prominent pagan philosophers, including the "keenest minds of the age, such as Lucian, Porphyry, and Celsus" (p. 43),³ spearheaded relentless objections at Christian beliefs during that era. One criticism levelled against the Christians then was their worship of Christ. Celsus said that "The Christians ... worshiped no God; no, not even a demon, but only a dead man. ... If they do not wish to worship the pagan gods," he said, 'why should they not rather pay their devotions to some of their own prophets than to a man who had been crucified by the Jews?" (p. 99).⁴

Based on a mistaken opinion

The most notable rebuttal to this criticism came via Origen, a prominent theologian born in Alexandria, Egypt, who lived during the latter part of the second century and the first half of the third. Origen addressed the criticisms raised by Celsus regard-

ing the worship of Christ in his book titled "Against Celsus" (*Contra Celsus*). Historians have recounted Origen's opinion regarding why they worship Christ as follows:

"Origen, the greatest of the early Christian writers, defended the Christians from the attacks of Celsus. This he did, not by denying the charge that they worshiped Christ but by showing that the Savior was worthy of such adoration because He was God. The gods of the pagans, he answers Celsus, 'were unworthy of worship; the Jewish prophets had no claim to it; on the other hand, Christ was worshiped not as a mere man, but as the Son of God, as God Himself . . .'" (p. 99)⁴

Clearly, Origen's explanation and justification for why Christians worship Christ were fundamentally flawed. Instead of consulting the writings of the apostles and conveying faithfully and accurately their teachings, he unwisely chose to give his own opinion. Had he sought the teachings of the apostles for the response to the criticism, he would not have committed a mistake that paved the way for the eventual formation of the false doctrine that Christ is God.

Indeed, the Bible explicitly articulates the reason for honoring Christ with worship. Worshiping Christ is not an acknowledgment of His supposed inherent nature as God, but a demonstration of obedience to the will of God. Apostle Paul proclaimed, thus:

"Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee

should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Phil. 2:9–11 New King James Version)

Moreover, the mere fact that Origen held this belief does not imply that it was widely accepted among Christians at that time. Even as late as the fourth century, there were Christians who opposed the doctrine of Christ's supposed divinity:

"The very fact that as late as the fourth century there were those within Christianity who, despite their acceptance of the Epistles of Paul and the Gospel of John, still argued against the divinity of the preexistent Christ shows that there was nothing in these writings which could be taken as conclusive evidence of a belief on the part of Paul and John that the preexistent Christ was God in the literal sense of the term." (pp. 306–307)⁵

Opposition to the false doctrine

One figure noted in history who opposed the flawed explanation regarding Christ's alleged deity was Arius, a presbyter or priest from Libya, residing in Alexandria, Egypt. This illustrates that for over three hundred years, there was no clear and formal doctrine regarding Christ's alleged divinity. The gradual inclusion of this doctrine into the body of what history calls Christian beliefs faced strong opposition.

Arius questioned, thus: "Could Christ, the Son, have as much divinity as His Father, who had created Him? Was He not less divine?

Was Jesus, whose teaching and life on earth was such an inspiration to them, less godlike than the Father? ... if God the Father and the Son were both divine, then wouldn't that mean that there were two Gods? If Christ were accepted as God, then wouldn't this mean that Christianity is not really a monotheistic religion?" (p. 394).⁶

Alexander, the bishop of Alexandria, attempted to address these questions. He "delivered a series of sermons maintaining strongly that Jesus Christ was Eternal God in the form of a man and that beliefs to the contrary were heretical" (p. 56).⁷

But Arius was not convinced by Alexander's personal interpretation. He contended "that Christ was a being, created out of nothing, subordinate to the Father and of a different essence from the Father; He was not coequal, coeternal or consubstantial with the Father. ... He was divine but not deity" (pp. 143–144).⁸

This resulted in Alexander ordering Arius to appear before him to defend his own position. In 318, "more than one hundred bishops attended the council, and the proceedings were predictably stormy." Both sides had their supporters. The majority group "drew up a creed—a Confession of Orthodoxy." Arius and his supporters refused to accept the false teachings it contained. Consequently, the local council excommunicated Arius and his followers and banished them from Alexandria (p. 57).⁹

As the conflict escalated even more, Arius sought support from his bishop-acquaintances in the East. The once local dispute quickly

Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

”

Philippians 2:9-11 New King James Version

took on a regional dimension, with theological experts then warning of its "potential to spread throughout the Mediterranean world" as "highly respected leaders of the Church had taken strongly opposed positions" (p. 46).⁷

This controversy caught the attention of Constantine, the emperor of the Roman Empire at that time. His advisors warned him that the dispute in Alexandria would jeopardize all his aspirations of uniting his empire. Thus, historians record that he determined that "something should be done to investigate the case and formulate a sensible policy to resolve the conflict" (p. 46).⁷

Thus, "Constantine summoned his closest Christian advisor, Hosius of Cordova," to investigate the Alexandrian controversy and make recommendations (pp. 47-49).⁷ Hosius "would write immediately to tell the emperor that compromise was impossible." At the same time, he "would recommend a strategy to end the division in the Christian community as quickly and deci-

sively as possible." He suggested that Constantine summon a council which the emperor could use to persuade the gathered bishops to denounce Arius and his followers (pp. 64-65).⁷

When 'Christ-is-God' doctrine was defined

And so, Constantine decided and convened an ecumenical council in Nicaea. Historians suggest that "for the first time the Church found itself dominated by the political leadership of the head of the state" (p. 143).⁸ The emperor personally covered all expenses, including transportation and lodging for the bishops in his palace, clearly highlighting his major and very influential role in that assembly.

According to historians, "The Emperor himself presided over the official session, and it was he who proposed the reconciling word, *homoousios* (Greek for 'of one essence') to describe Christ's relationship to the Father" (p. 134).⁹ However, historical records also indicate that

"Constantine had basically no understanding whatsoever of the questions that were being asked in Greek theology," and he saw the conflict as "nothing more than unnecessary bickering of theologians" (p. 51).¹⁰

During the council at Nicaea, Constantine commanded the bishops to "endorse a new creed that confirmed Christ as God" and to condemn Arius for denying it. This creed was indeed "new" because it was a departure from the original Christian belief about Christ's nature. Those who refused to sign it faced excommunication and exile under Constantine's decree (p. 17).¹¹

Hence, it was only "at the Council of Nicaea, that the Church defined ... that it was an article of faith that Jesus is truly God" (p. 206).¹² After the bishops had signed the new Creed in Nicaea, anyone who would deny Christ's alleged deity or anyone who still believed that He is not God was considered a criminal (p. 110).¹³ For that reason, it became clear why the belief that Christ is God gained widespread acceptance.

A different Jesus

As Christ declares that the Father is the only true God, He stresses the value of embracing this truth. Knowing the Father as the only true God and acknowledging Christ as one Who was sent by the only true God will lead to eternal life (John 17:3). Given such high stakes, if Christ were indeed the only true God, He would not mince words in declaring this for the sake of His believers. However, He consistently identifies the Father as the only true God.

Meanwhile, His apostles taught about His true nature. Apostle Peter declared that Christ is "a Man attested by God" (Acts 2:22 NKJV). Apostle Paul referred to the one Mediator between God and men as "*the* Man Christ Jesus" (I Tim. 2:5 NKJV). This is not surprising at all as it aligns with what they learned directly from Christ Himself when He proclaimed that He is "a Man who has told you the truth" (John 8:40 NKJV).

And so, the apostles, with urgency and concern, cautioned the true believers against tolerating preachers who propagated a distorted version of Jesus and any teaching about Him that is not aligned with the gospel:

"I am afraid that your minds will be corrupted and that you will abandon your full and pure devotion to Christ—in the same way that Eve was deceived by the snake's clever lies. For you glad-

ly tolerate anyone who comes to you and preaches a different Jesus, not the one we preached; and you accept a spirit and a gospel completely different from the Spirit and the gospel you received from us!" (II Cor. 11:3–4 Good News Bible)

Deviations from the biblical teachings should not be accepted. If we are seeking the eternal life, resisting erroneous doctrines is imperative. Clinging tightly to the true teachings imparted by Christ, explicitly outlined in the Bible, is essential. We must reject any notion of a different Jesus that was not taught in the Bible. Instead, let us affirm our commitment to the authentic teachings in the Bible.

Let us uphold what we received from Christ Himself: there is only one true God, the Father in Heaven. And let us recognize Christ according to how He introduced Himself: as One Who was sent by the Father in Heaven—not as "God." ☩

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The belief that Christ has a dual nature is against the teaching of the Bible

By ANDREW S. SILVA

THE NATURE OF our Lord Jesus Christ is often a topic of religious discussions. There are those who believe that Christ is part of what they call the Trinity, wherein there is God the Father, God the Son (who supposedly is Jesus Christ), and God the Holy Spirit, who all together are one God. Connected with this, of course, is the belief that Christ has a dual nature, or what is called the hypostatic union. They claim that Jesus is fully human and fully divine—that allegedly He is God and man at the same time and that these two natures cannot be separated.

To truly know the Lord God and the Lord Jesus Christ, it is important for people to consult the words of God, which are recorded only in the Bible. Therein the nature of God and the nature of His Son, the Lord Jesus

Christ, are introduced. But people will not find in the Holy Scriptures the belief that Christ is both God and man or has a dual nature. Instead, they will find out that such is not only unbiblical but actually contradicts the teachings of the Lord God and of the Lord Jesus Christ recorded in the Bible.

The state of being of God

In the Bible, how does the Lord God introduce Himself in regard to His nature or state of being? Does God agree that He has a dual nature as both God and man? He does not, but firmly declares:

"I will not execute the fierceness of My anger; I will not again destroy Ephraim. For I am God, and not man, The Holy One in your midst; And I will not come with terror." (Hos. 11:9
New King James Version)

The Lord God Himself teaches that He is God and not man. On the other hand, is it possible for a man such as the Lord Jesus Christ, to be man and also God, possessing dual nature? In the Bible, the Lord God explains in Ezekiel 28:2:

"Son of man, say unto the prince of Tyrus, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thine heart is lifted up, and thou hast said, I am a God, I sit in the seat of God, in the midst of the seas; yet thou art a man, and not God, though thou set thine heart as the heart of God" (King James Version)

The Lord God teaches that a man cannot be God because man is mortal, or subject to death, and not divine. This is true with the Lord Jesus Christ, Who is a man and experienced death on the cross (John 19:30, 33). On the other hand, God

is immortal and never dies (1 Tim. 1:17). The state of being or nature of God is different from and not the same as that of Christ. It is clear that the Bible teaches that God is not man and that man cannot be God. The Lord God does not agree with the belief that He or Christ has dual nature.

The state of being of Christ

In the Holy Scriptures, Christ teaches that He and the Lord God are distinct from each other in that they do not have the same nature. Christ teaches that He is a man: "But now you seek to kill Me, a Man who has told you the truth which I heard from God" (John 8:40 NKJV). On the other hand, He says that "God is Spirit" (John 4:24 NKJV). After the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, His disciples were surprised and afraid in their first encounter with Him because they thought that they had seen a spirit. But the Lord Jesus Christ corrected His disciples, saying that He is not a spirit, as God is, "for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have" (Luke 24:37-39 NKJV).

Thus, Christ reveals that His nature or state of being is different from that of the Lord God. Christ Himself teaches that He is a man Who has flesh and bones, while God is a spirit having no material or physical nature. And so, like the Lord God, the Lord Jesus Christ does not agree with the teaching that either He or God a dual nature.

The teaching of the dual nature of the Lord Jesus Christ, which alleges that He is both God and man,

does not exist in the Bible. Those who insist that Christ has a dual nature are precariously twisting and misinterpreting Bible verses just to make it appear that this false assumption has biblical basis—but to no avail.

The lordship of Christ and that of God

Those who insist that Christ is both God and man loosely interpret verses in the Bible in their attempts to authenticate their teaching. A case in point is their interpretation of the biblical verses where Christ was addressed as "Lord" (Phil. 2:11; 1 Cor. 8:6; Rom. 10:9). Just because in the verse Jesus Christ is referred to as "Lord" and God is also referred to as "Lord" in Isaiah 6:3, among other verses, they conclude that Christ is God. It is true that both God and Christ are referred to in the Bible as Lord. But does this necessarily mean that Christ is God?

There is a stark difference between the lordship of God and the lordship of Christ. The lordship of Christ was given to Him by the Lord God. In Acts 2:36, it states:

¶
**I will not execute the fierceness of My anger;
I will not again destroy Ephraim. For I am God,
and not man, The Holy One in your midst;
And I will not come with terror.**

"

Hosea 11:9
New King James Version

"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." (NKJV)

Thus, Christ is Lord because God made Him to be Lord. But the lordship of God is different; it is innate and intrinsic to God. No one assigned God His lordship or made Him Lord. Thus, one cannot claim that since Christ is Lord and God is Lord, Christ is God and man at the same time.

The purported equality of Christ and God

There are those who believe that Christ and God are equal to each other in power and authority, concluding that Christ is God while being man at the same time. They cite John 5:18 as the alleged proof of their claim. This verse highlights the instance when the Lord Jesus Christ performed a miracle of healing, restoring the health of a crippled man on the Sabbath day:

"Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said

that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God." (NKJV)

The Jewish leaders during that time were filled with hatred toward the Lord Jesus Christ and sought to kill Him. This is because from their viewpoint, Christ was making Himself equal to God in power and authority, which is a blasphemy. But, in the following verse, John 5:19, the Lord Jesus Christ corrected them:

"Then Jesus answered and said to them, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner.'" (NKJV)

Here, the Lord Jesus Christ teaches that He is not equal in power or authority to the Lord God because, as He says, "the Son (Christ) can do nothing of Himself" as Christ is subject to the authority of God.

This was also taught by Apostle Paul in I Corinthians 15:27–28, which states:

"As the Scriptures say, 'God put everything under his control.' When it says that 'everything' is put under him, it is clear that this does not include God himself. God is the one putting everything under Christ's control. After everything has been put under Christ, then the Son himself will be put under God. God is the one who put everything under Christ. And Christ will be put under God so that God will be the complete ruler over everything." (Easy-to-Read Version)

It is very clear that the Lord Jesus Christ and the Lord God are not equal. Though the Lord God placed all things under the control or authority of His Son, the Lord

**I am the LORD,
and there is
no other;
There is no God
besides Me.**

Isaiah 45:5
New King James Version

Jesus Christ, the Son is still subject or is under God, "So that God will be the complete ruler over everything." This further proves that Christ is not God, dismissing as categorically false the belief that Christ has a dual nature.

Eternal life in Christ's teaching about the one true God

What is another characteristic of the Lord God that proves that He alone is the supreme ruler over all creation? In Isaiah 45:5, the Lord God pronounces:

"I am the LORD, and there is no other; There is no God besides Me. . . ." (NKJV)

God does not recognize any other god as He declares: "There is no God besides Me." Meanwhile, does the Lord Jesus Christ claim that He is God and that He does not recognize any other gods? No. This is what Christ states in John 20:16–17:

"Jesus said to her, 'Mary,' she turned and said to Him, 'Rabboni (which is to say, Teacher). Jesus said to her, 'Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.'" (NKJV)

Thus, the Lord Jesus Christ does not recognize Himself as God, but instead acknowledges that His Father, Who is also our Father, is the only true God. The Lord Jesus Christ further clarifies this in John 17:1 and 3:

"After Jesus finished saying this, he looked up to heaven and said, 'Father, the hour has come. Give glory to your Son, so that the Son may give glory to you. . . . And eternal life means to know you, the only true God, and to know Jesus Christ, whom you sent'" (GNB).

In these verses, the Lord Jesus Christ was speaking to the Father through prayer. Christ expresses that He recognizes the Father as "the only true God." Again, Christ does not recognize Himself as God; neither does He express in any way that He was equal to God. In fact, the Lord Jesus Christ reveals that the way for one to attain eternal life is to truly know the Father as the only true God and to know Christ Whom God sent. Christ Himself makes it clear that the one who is sent is no greater than the one who sent Him (John 13:16).

To believe in the teaching that Christ has a dual nature, that He is both man and God, goes against the very teaching of Christ that is essential to attaining eternal life. ●

In John 14:9; 10:30; 8:58 Is Christ claiming to be God?

By GERSON S. NONATO

NOWHERE IN THE BIBLE is it ever recorded that Jesus says, "I am God." Still, proponents of the Christ-is-God doctrine assert that Christ has declared Himself to be God. And to prove their case, they cite verses in the Bible among which are John 14:9; 10:30; and 8:58. Let us examine their arguments and see if their claim that Christ is God holds water. Do these verses present that Christ is claiming to be God? Let's begin with John 14:9.

'He who has seen Me has seen the Father'

Believers of the Christ-is-God doctrine think that in John 14:9, Christ is declaring His supposed deity. The Bible records, thus:

"Jesus said to him, 'Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can

you say, "Show us the Father?"'" (John 14:9 New King James Version)

Because Christ said, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father," some have hastily jumped to the conclusion that (1) this is Christ's declaration that He is God, and (2) Christ is God incarnate. Their conclusion is sweeping because it should be noticed that when Christ said, "has seen the Father," He was not referring to the state of being of the Father, for God is Spirit, without flesh and bones—He is invisible or cannot be seen (John 4:24; Luke 24:39).

In the succeeding verses, John 14:10–11, Christ makes it clear what He means when He says that one who has seen Him has also seen the Father, thus:

"Don't you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words I say are not my own but are from my Father who lives in me. And he does his work through

me. Just believe it—that I am in the Father and the Father is in me. Or else believe it because of the mighty miracles you have seen me do." (Living Bible)

The Father is seen in Christ because Christ does the works of the Father. But this does not mean that Christ is the Father Himself or that He is God incarnate. There is a clear distinction between Christ and the Father. Christ's statement that God is in Him and lives or dwells in Him clearly shows that He is different from God and that He is not God because God Who dwells in Christ is different from Christ in Whom God dwells. Moreover, Christ Himself admits, "The words I say are not my own but are from my Father ... And he does his work through me."

Why is it then that one who has seen the works of the Father that Christ is doing has also seen the Father? The Bible explains:

Because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse." (Rom. 1:19–20 NKJV)

The invisible God can be seen and understood through His works that manifest His eternal power. However, does it mean that Christ is God because the works of God are seen in Him? Certainly not! Apostle Peter explained:

"Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know—Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death." (Acts 2:22–23 NKJV)

The phrase describing Jesus as "a Man attested by God" should leave no room for any doubt that Jesus is not God. Jesus Christ is different from the God Who attested about Him by the miracles, wonders, and signs that Christ performed. Moreover, Christ, as He is man (mortal) and not God (immortal) in nature or state of being, was "put to death."

Thus, the advocates of the Christ-is-God doctrine are mistaken in asserting that Christ claims to be God in John 1:19. Christ identifies Himself not as God, but rather, as the One Whom God sent to make God known to people and make them believe

in Him. Also, Christ cannot be God incarnate, because if Christ is God, it would mean that when He died on the cross, God also died, which is something absurd and ridiculous to think of. God, Who is the source of life, is indeed immortal and therefore has no death (I Tim. 1:17).

'I and My Father are one'

Another verse often used to prove the belief that Christ claimed to be God is John 10:30 because in this verse Christ says, "I and My Father are one" (NKJV). However, this conclusion made by the proponents of the Christ-is-God doctrine is not only illogical but also unbiblical, for it contradicts the teaching of Christ Himself.

Notice that Christ says that He and the Father are one, but He does not say that They are one God. Since Christ is not referring to His alleged divinity, how then are He and the Father one? John 10:30 is a conclusion statement made by Christ in His teachings. The preceding verses give the premises from where Christ's concluding statement—"I and My Father are one"—was derived:

"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand. I and My Father are one." (John 10:27–30 NKJV)

Clearly, Christ is speaking of how He and the Father take care of

As it is, you are looking for a way to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God.

"

John 8:40 New International Version 2011

the sheep—not about His alleged divinity. Christ guarantees that no one can snatch from His hand the sheep given to Him by the Father, which is also true with the Father—no one can snatch the sheep from the Father Who has given the sheep to Christ. This explains why Christ concludes in John 10:30, "I and My Father are one"—They are one or united in taking care of the sheep, and not in being God. In other translations of the Bible, this is how John 10:30 is rendered: "I and my Father are of one accord" (Lamsa Translation); "My Father and I are united" (Simple English Bible).

That is similar to what Apostle Paul said: "I planted, Apollos watered, ... Now he who plants and he who waters are one" (I Cor. 3:6–8 NKJV). That does not mean that Paul is Apollos and Apollos is Paul. They are two separate individuals. However, as both Paul and Apollos are workers in God's field, they are one in purpose: "The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor" (I Cor. 3:8 New International Version 2011).

It should be considered as well that Christ even prays to God for

to people whom God has given
Him—that they may be one, just
as you and I are one" (John 17:11,
22–23 GNB, *emphasis added*). Are they
not gods, too? Certainly not!

Logically and logically speaking,
Jesus and God are not one in
essence (John 8:16–18) and in state
of being for God is spirit and
Christ has flesh and bones (John
1:14; Luke 24:39).

'Before Abraham was, I am'

For the proponents of Christ-is-God
to argue what Christ says in John 8:58
could only mean a claim to His divinity:

Your father Abraham rejoiced to
see My day, and he saw it and was glad.
Jesus said to them, 'Most assuredly,
I say to you, before Abraham was,
I AM!' (John 8:56, 58 NKJV)

Even though the verse has no mention of God, some wrongly interpreted Christ's statement "Before Abraham was, I am" as a claim both to His divinity and His pre-existence. This is because, as they would cite, in Exodus 3:14, God referred to Himself as "I AM WHO I AM" when He spoke to Moses. Hence, just because God says "I AM WHO I AM" and Christ says "I AM," they concluded that Christ is God. However, it is not only Christ who uttered, "I am," in the Bible. In Genesis

27:24, Jacob uttered, "I am"; even the formerly blind man whom Christ cured also uttered, "I am" (John 9:9); and the angel who appeared to Manoah, father of Samson, uttered, "I am" as well (Judg. 13:11). Does that make them gods, too? Certainly not!

Christ-is-God doctrine proponents also claim that Christ's statement, "Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and ... before Abraham was, I am" implies His alleged pre-existence. However, this interpretation is illogical and unbiblical as it contradicts the truth in the Bible that Christ is "Abraham's seed" or descendant (Gal. 3:16).

What is it then that Christ refers to as "My day" and in what sense did Abraham "see" it? It refers to the day of His coming or Judgment Day (John 8:56 GNB, Knox; II Pet. 3:7, 10). By his faith, Abraham saw that from afar and is assured of receiving the promised heavenly abode or the Holy City on Christ's Second Advent (Heb. 11:13, 16).

Since Christ has no pre-existence, why then does He say that "before Abraham was, I am"? The Bible has this answer:

"Foreknown, indeed, before the foundation of the world, he has been manifested in the last times for your sakes." (I Pet. 1:20 Confraternity Version)

Christ was before Abraham because He was already foreknown or planned by God even before the foundation of the world. So, when it comes to existence, Christ did not precede Abraham, for He is a descendant of Abraham (Gal. 3:16). However, before Abraham was born or even before the world was created, God has already planned of having Christ.

'God sent me'

If Christ claims to be God, He could have said outright, "I am God," but He does not because doing so is a blasphemy against God which the enemy of Christ accused Him of. It is worth noting that believers of the Christ-is-God teaching today interpret His words in the same way as His enemies did. They all thought wrong that Christ was claiming divinity. If only they had the right understanding of what Christ said, they would have not thought that Christ claimed to be God—because He never did.

In John 8:40 and 42, Christ, in no uncertain terms, clarifies Who He is: "As it is, you are looking for a way to kill me, **a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God.** ... 'If God were your Father, you would love me, for I have come here from God. I have not come on my own; **God sent me**'" (NIV, *emphases added*).

Christ does not only declare that He is a man but He also clarifies that He is distinct from God. Christ is not God, but sent by God. His marvelous works and His teachings are not proofs of His alleged divinity but rather of His being sent or being a messenger of the Father, the only true God. ☩

"Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know."

"

Thought of disobedience being sown continuously

Taking various deceptive forms, this ancient thought has been continuously sown to bring about destructions of every kind to a multitude of those deceived.

By CELERINO G. BACLAAN

FORESEEING HOW DANGEROUS and difficult the last days would be, Apostle Paul gave this warning, thus:

"You may as well know this too, Timothy, that in the last days it is going to be very difficult to be a Christian. For people will love only themselves and their money; they will be proud and boastful, sneering at God, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful to them, and thoroughly bad. They will be hardheaded and never give in to others; they will be constant liars and troublemakers and will think nothing of **immorality**. They will be rough and cruel, and sneer at those who try to be good. They will betray their friends; they will be hotheaded, puffed up with pride, and prefer good times to worshiping God. They will go to church, yes, but they won't really believe anything they hear. Don't be taken in by people like that." (II Tim. 3:1-5 Living Bible, *emphasis added*)

What Apostle Paul said to Timothy described in detail the characteristic of the time, a precaution to all, about the moral condition that would prevail in the last days. As reflected in the verses, people's attitude toward themselves, toward God, and toward others reveals those who live the unchristian way. In contrast, the distinctly God-fearing Christians and consistently conservative in their spiritual life, look at such moral situation of the world as moral decadence or moral decay showing how ungodly not a few have become—"people will think nothing of immorality," as explicitly stated above.

As a case in point, a multitude of liberated and individualistic people utterly and deliberately disregard Christian values, for they view them as obsolete, hindering progress and depriving them to do whatever they want to do, to enjoy, and be happy.

Likewise, they contend that to survive the challenges of the postmodern times, the term used by academicians and philosophers of this age, one must be pragmatic or practical to fit in where he lives and meet the changing demands of the times even if such attitude opposes God's laws.

The perverted practices and behavior that the Bible categorically states as immoral (I Cor. 6:9) and had been virtually regarded as such in the past centuries are now tolerated and widely accepted as legal. Conservative theologians and religious leaders look at these changes in attitude as assaults of modernity against Christianity. Preaching God's word or the Good News as the standard of righteous living, the Apostle Paul stated that doers of immoral acts do not care anymore about right and wrong, losing all feelings of shame as they give themselves up to licentiousness, greedy to practice every

kind of uncleanness (Eph. 4:19). For such people morality now must be viewed as either relative or subjective, that is—"No longer is there universal, timeless, and absolute standard for morality today since everything is changing, the inevitable need of the time, popularly called 'paradigm shift,'" so they assert and insist.

Critically looking at the norm beyond

The biblical standard applied to sexual relationships and marital practices has been shifted radically. Sexual practices and marital union have been viewed solely as a matter of personal choice or freedom he should not be deprived of. As brought about by the sexual revolution, a major social change in the West in the 20th century, they are simply regarded as private affairs. If a person condemns someone for his preferred sexual relationship and practice, the former will surely be accused of being judgmental and disrespecting the latter's right and freedom.

Doing ungodly or unchristian sexual practice or union is definitely a form of disobedience to the will of God, yet today it has been tolerated and established as norm, in fact pervasively promoted, and defended as legal in a number of societies across the globe. In a society where one's cravings for pleasure and personal happiness are its people's first and foremost concern in life, spiritual matters are utterly disregarded. For instance, the sanctity of marriage and of family which God instituted for man's welfare has been intentionally violated for considerations that are personal and practical. Although this

global and gross defiance of God's commandments brings about serious consequences such as social ills, disharmony, and terrible if not deadly diseases, and finally sufferings of the affected; only God-fearing people do worry about man's disobedience. The more compelling issue than that is man's accountability to his Creator for any action he does. The Bible states:

"... Fear God and obey his commandments, for this is the entire duty of man. For God will judge us for everything we do, including every hidden thing, good or bad." (Eccles. 12:13-14 LB)

“

You may as well know this too, Timothy,
that in the last days
it is going to be
very difficult
to be a Christian.

”

II Timothy 3:1
Living Bible

For individuals whose first and foremost concerns are their cravings for pleasures and happiness, it does not make sense to them if they disobey God's commandment. What for them do make sense are the philosophy and ideology tolerating their secular

behavior and practices. For instance, today's prevailing philosophies of humanism and relativism and gender ideology promote freedom to do whatever one wants or desires even if it is immoral. Social disorder and other negative effects resulting from morally wrong practices are being viewed as merely secular matters, the norm and nothing more.

Looking at any man's act of disobedience to God's will beyond the secular perception, one will affirm that disobedience has been sown in one's mind and heart. Indeed, this scheme has been perpetuated since the beginning of the history of mankind. The influence of the one behind disobedience has been very evident—Satan is at work in the hearts of those who disobey God's will (Eph. 2:1-3; John 8:44).

Man's fall from God's grace

Disobedience is what caused the first couple to fall from God's grace. Not only He provided them with a dwelling place, Eden, abounding in all their needs in life, but also He protected them saying, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die" (Gen. 2:16-17 New International Version).

The couple's serene and joyful life was invaded by a clever and deceptive destroyer of mankind of all times—the all-time sower of disobedience. Shrewdly disguising himself in the form of a serpent, the craftiest of all the creatures, he worked on his scheme:

"... So the serpent came to the woman. 'Really?' he asked. 'None of the fruit in the garden? God says

you mustn't eat *any* of it? Of course we may eat it,' the woman told him. It's only the fruit from the tree at the center of the garden that we are not to eat. God says we mustn't eat it or even touch it, or we will die... That's a lie,' the serpent hissed. 'You'll not die. God knows very well that the instant you eat it you will become like him, for your eyes will be opened... you will be able to distinguish good from evil.' The woman was convinced. How lovely and fresh looking it was! And it would make her so wise! So she ate some of the fruit and gave some to her husband, and he ate it too.' (Gen. 3:1-6 LB)

The rest is history—the couple's very tragic end, a consequence of what they deliberately chose and what they decided to totally disregard—which all should not forget!

Perpetuation of disobedience

In the Old Testament, two narratives on people's acts of disobedience, among others recorded in the Holy Scriptures, are worth mentioning. God made these cases examples or reminders for all the ungodly or the wicked in the future to look back upon and fear (II Pet. 2:5-6 LB) about what will happen to them on the Day of Judgment (II Pet. 2:9).

First, when people had spread all over the world and God saw how great their wickedness was and filthy their mind on earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of their heart was only evil all the time, He decided that He would bring the great flood on the world (Gen. 6:5). He destroyed them for choosing to disobey or do evil, but He spared Noah who preached righteousness

and spoke for God, saving him and his family (II Pet. 2:5).

Later, God did condemn the idolatrous Sodom and Gomorrah, destroying the cities and the people dwelling there with fire because of the abominable perverse sexual practices of men, young and old, having sexual relations with men. He made them an example of what will happen to the godless. Only Lot whom God found righteous and his daughters were saved (Gen. 19:4-5, 15-17).

In the Christian era, Apostle Paul wrote about God's wrath against mankind due to their blasphemous practice of idolatry or worship of images (Rom. 1:18, 21-23). Idolatry, a pagan practice of the Gentiles who did their offerings to demons (Deut. 32:17) or sacrificing to evil spirits (Lev. 17:7 LB). Paul, in his letter to the Church in Rome, warned them that they should not participate in such detestable act in the eyes of God reminding them that God's commandment to recognize and worship Him as the only true God has been continuously violated. The thoughts of image worshipers have become complete nonsense, making their minds foolish and their hearts filled with darkness (Rom. 1:18-21; I Cor. 10:20). One example of empty minds filled with darkness, according to Paul, is that they have been given over to do shameful things their hearts desire with each other—"Even the women turned against the natural way to have sex and instead indulged in sex with each other. And the men, instead of having normal sexual relations with women, burned with lust for each other. Men did shameful things with other men" (Rom. 1:26-27 New Living Translation).

Whatever form disobedience takes, this evil thought being continuously sown by the devil, as he invades and corrupts the hearts and minds of his victims, brings upon them destructions of every kind.

Pondering on the lessons of the past

Perfectly just and merciful, God has given everyone more than enough time to rid himself or herself of any thought of disobedience to His will. God has gifted every person the faculties—mind, heart, and conscience among others—to discern not only actions but also the motives beneath these actions in order to make sound decisions so as not to defy any of His laws. Doing so is not only an incontrovertibly righteous act but also pleasing to God that is far beyond important.

Equally important is the realization or understanding that the one behind any act of disobedience to the will of God is the sower of that seed, the devil or Satan, with his deceptive and sugarcoated schemes. Choosing to disobey, which is definitely a deliberate act, is choosing to fall into self-destruction. One must be wise that he will not be among the victims of the enemy's perpetuation of the evil seed while it is not yet too late.

As the Church Of Christ in these last days continues propagating the true Christian faith amid all odds, it also brings to the attention of many the above extremely important concern—obeying God's commandments and living in accordance to His will as they ponder on Christ's mission in proclaiming the message of God's salvation. ●

The uniqueness of the one true God

By SIEGFRED T. GOLLAYAN

WHO IS THE TRUE GOD? Different people give various, contradicting answers to this question. Some people find it controversial, however, when they hear from members of the *Iglesia Ni Cristo* (Church Of Christ) that they believe that the Father in heaven alone is God. This is because the popular belief among Christian-professing churches is that God has three distinct persons (the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit), each of whom is allegedly God. Based on this belief of theirs, Christ, Who is the Son, is God—not to mention the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Scriptures highlight the necessity of recognizing the Lord God to receive the eternal life (John 17:1, 3). But to be deemed worthy of salvation, one's knowledge about God must be correct. Having a belief that deviates from the truths that the Bible teaches about the one true God

Whom Christ Himself introduces is equivalent to not knowing God at all. This includes recognizing a god or gods other than the Father and mistaking someone else for God, for example, Jesus Christ.

God's true nature

Indeed, many people have mistaken the Lord Jesus Christ for God. They have thought so because of the great attributes that Christ possesses that cannot be found in any other human being. But an attribute of the true God that is different from the nature of the Lord Jesus was explained by Christ Himself:

"*God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.*" (John 4:24 New King James Version)

Since God is spirit in nature, this means that He cannot be seen or He is invisible (I Tim. 1:17). Meanwhile, what can also be clearly read in the Bible is Christ's

pronouncement that He has "flesh and bones" that "a spirit does not have" (Luke 24:37–39 NKJV).

Therefore, Christ proves that He is not a spirit. He also proves that He is visible. So, when it comes to nature or state of being, Christ is clearly different from God. Jesus Christ cannot be God.

Being different from the true God, Christ declares His true nature or state of being, thus:

"*But now you seek to kill Me, a Man who has told you the truth which I heard from God. ...*" (John 8:40 NKJV)*

By declaring that He is a man or human being (Shared Heritage Bible), Christ proves that He is not God because God does not consent to being recognized as man:

"*I will not execute the fierceness of My anger; I will not again destroy Ephraim. For I am God, and not man, The Holy One in your midst; And I will not come with terror.*" (Hos. 11:9 NKJV)*

Some of the attributes unique to God

He is Almighty (Gen. 17:1)

He is the Creator of all things (Isa. 45:18)

He is from everlasting (Ps. 90:2)

He recognizes no other God besides Him (Deut. 32:39)

Other qualities of God

God is spirit in nature, without flesh and bones (John 4:24; Luke 24:39)

He is not man (Hos. 11:9)

The true God is Almighty

Another unique attribute of God is that He is all and most powerful:

"When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him and said, 'I am God Almighty; walk before me faithfully and be blameless'" (Gen 17:1 New International Version 2011)*

There is only one God Who is over all, the Father (Eph. 4:6). While Christ has power also, that power was only given to Him:

"And how very great is his power at work in us who believe. This power working in us is the same as the mighty strength which he used when he raised Christ from death and seated him at his right side in the heavenly world. Christ rules there above all heavenly rulers, authorities, powers, and lords; he has a title superior to all titles of authority in this world and in the next. God put all things under Christ's feet and gave him to the church as supreme Lord over all things." (Eph. 1:19-22 Good News Bible)*

It cannot be rightly said that Christ is the Almighty God because although all things have been put under His authority, Christ will place Himself under the authority of God

so that "God will rule completely over all" (I Cor. 15:27-28 GNB).

God has no origin and is the Creator of all

God's infinite power is manifested in the things in heaven and on earth, that He all created:

"You alone are the LORD; You have made heaven, The heaven of heavens, with all their host, The earth and everything on it, The seas and all that is in them, And You preserve them all. The host of heaven worships You." (Neh. 9:6 NKJV)

Meanwhile, Christ says that He can do nothing of Himself (John 5:30). Further negating the claim of others that Christ is God is the fact that Christ is a created being (Col. 1:15). Christ even emphasizes concerning His origin, thus:

"Jesus said to them, 'If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me'" (John 8:42 NKJV)*

Coming from the Lord God, it follows that Christ has a beginning. On the other hand, the true God, the Father, does not have an origin, for He is from everlasting to everlasting:

"Before the mountains were brought forth, Or ever You had formed the earth and the world, Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God." (Ps. 90:2 NKJV)

No other God besides the Father

God does not allow that there be other gods besides Him. He says, "there is no God besides Me" (Deut. 32:39 NKJV). Hence, even the teaching that there are three persons in one God goes against what God Himself declares.

The fact is, Jesus Christ recognizes the Father as His God (John 20:17). Therefore, it is absolutely certain that Christ is not God.

It is vital for man to know that the Father is the only true God because such knowledge leads to the attainment of eternal life:

"After Jesus finished saying this, he looked up to heaven and said, 'Father, the hour has come. Give glory to your Son, so that the Son may give glory to you. ... And this is the real and eternal life: That they know you, The one and only true God, And Jesus Christ, whom you sent.'" (John 17:1 GNB, 3 The Message) ●

*Emphases added

The kind of life that God expects from His chosen ones

By GLADY C. GADDI

AMONG THE THINGS happening today that have become extraordinary and are causing alarm and fear to many is violence. Besides the ever-present threat of terrorism, wars between conflicting countries continue. News about heinous crimes committed in various parts of the world are all over the radio, television, and the internet. Many innocent lives have been lost or ruined because of different kinds of evil.

Yet, despite the well-meaning efforts of those concerned, lawlessness is perpetuated and continues worsening.

The world under God's judgment
Such present condition of life is the result of the nature of the people of this world. The Bible says:

"All have turned away from God; they have all gone wrong; no one does what is right, not even one.

Their words are full of deadly deceit; wicked lies roll off their tongues, and dangerous threats, like snake's poison, from their lips; their speech is filled with bitter curses. They are quick to hurt and kill." (Rom. 3:12-15 Good News Bible)

The Bible proves that all have turned away from the true God and have gone wrong; no one does right, not even one. Why does this happen? Because instead of using his faculties and abilities for doing good, man uses them for various kinds of evil.

The Bible also tells that "Such people are depraved, all their deeds are vile, not one of them does what is good" (Ps. 53:1-3 Complete Jewish Bible). Because of this, the world has been brought under God's judgment:

"Now we know that everything in the Law applies to those who live under the Law, in order to stop all human excuses and bring the whole world under God's judgment. ... ev-

eryone has sinned and is far away from God's saving presence." (Rom. 3:19, 23 GNB)

Because "everyone has sinned," God decided to "bring the whole world under [His] judgment." What is the verdict on all who have sinned? They must pay for the wages of sin: death (Rom. 6:23)—not only the cessation of breath but ultimately the second death in the lake of fire, which is the eternal punishment (Rev. 20:14).

The ones who were justified

This does not mean, however, that no one will be saved. Apostle Paul proved that there are those who were chosen by God to become holy and blameless:

"For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight." (Eph. 1:4 New International Version)

God's chosen ones live differently from the way the people of

the world do. If the people of the world indulge in different kinds of sins and vices, the chosen ones dedicate themselves to works of holiness.

Some might ask: "How did God's chosen ones become holy when they too have committed sins?" Although they also committed sin, but because of God's love and through the efficacy of Christ's blood, they were justified or made right with Him.

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!" (Rom. 5:8-9 NIV)

Because they were justified, God's chosen ones were forgiven or cleansed. As such, they have been made holy. As a result, the Bible says that they shall "be saved from God's wrath through Him." That is why those who belong to God's chosen people are very fortunate—they have received redemption and forgiveness of sins. Hence, they are the ones certain of salvation on the Day of Judgment.

What was redeemed with the blood of Christ was identified by the apostles, thus:

"Take heed therefore to yourselves and to all the flock over which the Holy Spirit has appointed you overseers, to feed the church of Christ which he has purchased with his blood." (Acts 20:28 Lamsa Translation)

The Church Of Christ is the one proven by the apostles that was re-

deemed with the blood of Christ. Hence, the members of the Church Of Christ are the ones who have been forgiven of their sins and are God's chosen ones. As such, they ought to remain holy and blameless in His sight.

It follows then that Church members should not disappoint God in what He expects of them. Wherever they may go and whatever situation they may be in, they should strive to be holy. They must not be tempted to commit sin or violate His laws, even amid hardships that may come into their lives.

Remaining in holiness

The apostles gave a timely reminder so that God's chosen ones can stand firm on the holiness that God expects of them even if and despite the fact that the world around them is evil:

"Now, the important thing is that your way of life should be as the gospel of Christ requires, so that, whether or not I am able to go and see you, I will hear that you are standing firm with one common purpose and that with only one desire you are fighting together for the faith of the gospel." (Phil. 1:27 GNB)

The apostles instructed God's chosen ones or the members of the Church Of Christ to live according to the gospel of Christ. They should not be seen doing the sins of the flesh, which include drunkenness, adultery, gambling, and the like (Gal. 5:19-21). Instead, they should "train ... to be godly" (I Tim. 4:7-8 NIV) by always obeying the commandments of God. If they are trained in faith-

ful obedience, then they are able to live in holiness even in the face of hindrances. They ought to do so because "without holiness no one will see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14 NIV), or will not be saved.

If Church Of Christ members remain living in holiness, God reserves victory for them and they can expect Him to be their shield or protection:

"He holds victory in store for the upright, he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless." (Prov. 2:7 NIV)

Therefore, even in this life, the upright or blameless members of the Church have much to gain by leading a clean way of life. They will not be disappointed in their good intentions in life because God will give them victory. They will never be hindered and put down by the tests and temptations because God will help and protect them. Thus, they must stand their ground in living in holiness by constant obedience to the commandments of God as long as they live:

"How I love your laws! How I enjoy your commands! ... Just tell me what to do and I will do it, Lord. As long as I live I'll wholeheartedly obey." (Ps. 119:47, 33-34 Living Bible)

This kind of positive response is what God wants to see in His chosen ones whenever they receive His commands—they love very much and enjoy His commandments. And even in the midst of this evil world, they must not fail to meet His expectation by carrying out His commands wholeheartedly as long as they live. ●

Christian Achievers

A national living treasure's greatest treasure in life

BY JESSICA A. OLANO

In OCTOBER 2023, just over a month following her 99th birthday, Sister Magdalena "Dalen" Gamayo, a master weaver and member of the Iglesia Ni Cristo (Church Of Christ) in the Local Congregation of Lumbaan, Ecclesiastical District of Batac City, Ilocos Norte, received a prestigious invitation. The National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) invited her to be the guest of honor at the art exhibit 'Inubon a Dayan' (Ilocano for 'String of Honor'). This remarkable exhibit showcased her life and enduring dedication to her craft, spotlighting her intricately-patterned, hand-woven fabrics known as *abel Iloco*, which she herself painstakingly crafted.

In 2012, Sister Dalen was conferred with the prestigious title of "National Living Treasure" by the NCCA, the highest accolade bestowed upon an artisan, craftsman, or folk artist. Her exceptional expertise in *inabel* weaving, a distinctive style native to the Ilocano people of Northern Luzon, Philippines, earned her this esteemed recognition. That same year, she was also honored with the *Gawad Manlilikha ng Bayan* (GAMABA) award in the textile category by the President of the Philippines.

Reflecting on her journey, Sister Dalen narrated, "I started learning to weave at the age of 16. I just observed my aunts work the loom. When they saw that I learned quickly, they provided me with my own tools for weaving."

Sister Dalen after a worship service (top); while she weaves using the traditional loom (above); and her certificates and awards in recognition of her *inabel* weaving



After a while, she also started teaching the craft and gladly shared her talent with others. "When I am able to weave beautiful *abels*, I become very happy to see my works, especially now that many appreciate them. That is one of my joys in life," she said.

On Sister Dalen's 99th birthday, the inauguration of the Pinili Inabel Center marked a significant milestone.

Sister Dalen at the façade of the Pinili Inabel Center—an edifice built as a tribute to her dedication to *inabel* weaving.



With research assistance from
Montriville Boy, Jake Torio, and Renalyn Rodrigo
Photos courtesy of INCTV

Located in her neighborhood, the said edifice houses the looms she used and the fabrics she has woven, serving as a hub for aspiring weavers to learn the craft. It stands as a tribute to her dedication to preserving *inabel* weaving and supporting her community's livelihood. Despite the distance, tourists, both local and foreign, flock to Pinili to admire her exquisite fabrics. She said, "To create high-quality *abel*, one must concentrate and have a peaceful mind while weaving. One should think of nothing else but the task at hand to make a good design."

Greater than Sister Dalen's passion for weaving is her faith—her membership in the Church Of Christ. She recounted, "In the past, I was in the Philippine Independent Church, then became a Catholic. I also became a Protestant at one

point." When she learned and believed in God's teachings written in the Bible preached by a minister of the Church Of Christ, and was later on baptized in 2005, she has always remained diligent in attending the worship services. "Even though I am old, I will continue to serve God. There are many persecutions, but I ignore them all. I value this divine calling above anything else. I value the one true God Whom I worship and serve," she confirmed.

Sister Dalen's commitment to sharing her weaving expertise pales in comparison to her fervent desire to spread the true faith. Her nephew, Brother Marjo Galinato, a head deacon, testified to Sister Dalen's active participation to help in propagation works: "She always invites people to attend Bible studies and evangelical missions. When tourists visit her, she displays

copies of the *Pasugo: God's Message* magazine for them to freely take."

Because of Sister Dalen and her relatives who actively share their faith with their community, almost all the weavers under her tutelage, including some of their family members, are already Church Of Christ members. "God has helped me so much. Everything I have now is from Him. Since I received this divine calling, I have found peace and joy in the worship services. The teachings of God strengthen me," she emphasized. On the day she was baptized, she said that she made a promise to God that she would make her faith the greatest treasure in her life. She continued, "My membership in the Church Of Christ is very valuable to me. I will worship and serve God for as long as I live." ☽

Joseph is sold into slavery

Despite what his brothers did to him, Joseph became successful because the Lord was with him.

In the land of Canaan, Jacob lived with his twelve sons. Among them was Joseph, whom he dearly loved. Joseph's brothers became jealous of and harbored resentment against him when he received a richly ornamented coat as a special gift from Jacob. And when Joseph told his brothers of his dreams in which their sheaves of grains and also the sun, moon, and stars bowed down to him—which meant that he would one day reign over them—they all the more hated him. One day, Jacob asked Joseph to check on his brothers in Shechem where they take care of their father's flock. On his way there, Joseph met a certain man as he was looking for his brothers (Gen. 37:1–16).

ers, they ripped off his long robe with full sleeves. Then they took him and threw him into the well, which was dry.

While they were eating, they suddenly saw a group of Ishmaelites travelling from Gilead to Egypt. Their camels were loaded with spices and resins. Judah said to his brothers, "What will we gain by killing

our brother and covering up the murder? Let's sell him to these Ishmaelites. Then we won't have to hurt him; after all, he is our brother, our own flesh and blood." His brothers agreed, and when some Midianite traders came by, the brothers pulled Joseph out of the well and sold him for twenty pieces of silver to the Ishmaelites, who took him to Egypt.

THE MAN SAID, "They have already left. I heard them say that they were going to Dothan." So Joseph went after his brothers and found them at Dothan. They saw him in the distance, and before he reached them, they plotted against him and decided to kill him. They said to one another, "Here comes that dreamer. Come on now, let's kill him and throw his body into one of the dry wells. We can say that a wild animal killed him. Then we will see what becomes of his dreams."

Reuben heard them and tried to save Joseph. "Let's not kill him," he said. "Just throw him into this well in the wilderness, but don't hurt him." He said this, planning to save him from them and send him back to his father. When Joseph came up to his broth-

When Reuben came back to the well and found that Joseph was not there, he tore his clothes in sorrow. He returned to his brothers and said, "The boy is not there! What am I going to do?"

Then they killed a goat and dipped Joseph's robe in its blood. They took the robe to their father and said, "We found this. Does it belong to your son?"



Artist's rendition by JULIUS M. GOPEZ
Colorist: MIGUEL MIRO B. FRANCISCO

He recognized it and said, "Yes, it is his! Some wild animal has killed him. My son Joseph has been torn to pieces!" Jacob tore his clothes in sorrow and put on sackcloth. He mourned for his son a long time. All his sons and daughters came to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted and said, "I will go down to the world of the dead still mourning for my son." So he continued to mourn for his son Joseph.

Now the Ishmaelites had taken Joseph to Egypt and sold him to Potiphar, one of the king's officers, who was the captain of the palace guard. The LORD was with Joseph and made him successful. He lived in the house of his Egyptian master, who saw that the LORD was with Joseph and had made him successful in everything he did. Potiphar was pleased with him and made him his personal servant; so he put him

in charge of his house and everything he owned. From then on, because of Joseph the LORD blessed the household of the Egyptian and everything that he had in his house and in his fields. Potiphar turned over everything he had to the care of Joseph and did not concern himself with anything except the food he ate. ●

(Genesis 37:17–35; 39:1–6
Good News Bible)

Pangulong Iudling

Ang pinagmulan ng aral na si Cristo diumano ay Diyos

HAOS 1,700 TAON na ang nakararaan nang mabuo ang isang alituntunin o pagpapahayag ng pananampalataya: na si Cristo ay Diyos. Ito ang tinawag na *Nicene Creed*, katawagang hango sa konsilyo ng Iglesia Katolika na bumuo nito—ang Konsilyo ng Nicaea noong ikaapat na siglo A.D.:

Kaya, halimbawa, noon lamang 325 A.D. sa Konsilyo ng Nicaea nang ipaliwanag ng Iglesia sa atin na isang alituntunin ng pananampalataya na si Jesus ay tunay na Diyos.” (*Discourses on the Apostles' Creed*,* p. 206)**

Ang katotohanan na kinailangan pa ang isang konsilyo makalipas ang mahigit dalawang siglo mula nang maisulat ang Biblia upang gawing isang “punto ng ortodoksiya na ang Anak ay ‘tunay na Diyos’” (*The Doctrine of God*, p. 59) ay matibay na katunayan na walang aral na mababasa sa Banal na Kasulatan na si Cristo ay Diyos. Bagkus, ang pagkakabuo ng aral na si Cristo’y Diyos ay nagdaan muna, batay sa tala ng kasaysayan, sa isang mahaba at kumplikadong proseso.

Ang mga tunay na Cristiano sa panahon ni Cristo at ng Kaniyang mga apostol ay hindi nagtaglay at nagtaguyod ng paniniwala na si Jesus ay Diyos. Itinuro ni Apostol Pedro na si Jesus ay “isang katangi-tanging tao” (Gawa 2:22 Easy-to-Read New Testament).** Ipinakilala naman ni Apostol Pablo ang Tagapagligtas bilang “ang taong si Cristo Jesus” (I Tim. 2:5). Hindi kailanman kinilala ng mga unang Cristiano si Cristo bilang Diyos sapagkat para sa kanila, “may isang Dios *lamang*, ang Ama” (I Cor. 8:6).

Ang kanilang paniniwala na si Cristo ay tao at hindi Diyos ay natutuhan nila sa Panginoong Jesus mismo, na nagpahayag na Siya'y “taong ... nagsaysay ng katotohanan, na [Kaniyang] narinig sa Dios” (Juan 8:40*). Si Cristo rin ang nagtuturo na ang Kaniyang Ama ang “iisang Dios na tunay” (Juan 17:3, 1; 20:17).

Maging ang ilang awtoridad Katolika ay nagpapatunay na hindi mababasa sa mga aklat ng Ebanghelyo na si Cristo ay tinawag na Diyos:

“Si Jesus kailanma'y hindi tinawag na Diyos sa alinman sa tatlong naunang Ebanghelyo (*Synoptic Gospels*) ... Maging ang ikaapat na Ebanghelyo ay hindi kailanman naglalarawan na si Jesus ay tiyakang nagsabi na siya'y Diyos. ... Kaya, walang dahilan upang isipin na si Jesus ay tinawag na Diyos sa mga pinakaunang bahagi ng Bagong Tipan.” (*Jesus: God & Man*,* p. 30)**

Itinala ng mga manunulat-kasaysayan na ang tinatawag na *Apostolic Fathers*, na itinuturing ng iba na “mga pansariling alagad ng mga apostol,” ay kumilala kay Jesus “bilang **banal na tagapagpahayag ng kaalaman tungkol sa tunay na Diyos**” (*A History of the Christian Church*,* p. 37)**—maliwanag na Cristo na hindi Diyos at kaiba sa Diyos. Isang Amerikanong iskolar naman ang sumulat na “sa katpusan ng panahon ng mga ‘Apostolic Fathers’ ay **walang paniniwala ukol sa Trinidad na eksistido na noong una pa. ... Walang binabanggit ukol sa isang Cristong eksistido na noong una pa**” (*The Philosophy of the Church Fathers*,* pp. 190–191).**

Isang paring Katoliko, si Joseph Pohle, ay nagsabing “Ang ilang mga makabagong manunulat ay naniniwala na maging ang ‘Didache’, o ang ‘Teachings of the Twelve Apostles’ (Ang mga Turo ng Labindalawang Apostol) ... ay **hindi** nagtaglay ng formal na pagpapahayag ng pananampalataya sa pagka-Diyos ni Jesucristo ...” (*The Divine Trinity*,* p. 150).**

Ang isang katibayan na ang paniniwalang si Cristo ay Diyos ay hindi malaganap na tinanggap hanggang sa ikaapat na siglo, ay ang pagtutol sa nasabing paniniwala ng mga “nasa loob ng Cristianismo”:

“...noong ikaapat na siglo, ay may mga nasa loob ng Cristianismo na ... tumututol pa rin sa pagiging Diyos ng Cristong eksistido na noong una pa” (*The Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, pp. 306–307)***

Ang isa sa mga pangunahing tumutol sa turo na si Cristo ay Diyos ay si Ario, isang pari o presbitero, na “gumawa ng mga nakagagambalang pagtatanong”:

"Maaari bang si Cristo na Anak ay magtaglay ng katulad ng pagkadiyos ng Ama na humalang sa Kaniya? Hindi ba mas mababa ang Kaniyang pagiging banal? Hindi ba si Cristo, na ang mga aral at ang naging buhay rito sa lupa ay naging isang inspirasyon sa kanila, ay mas mababa ang pagiging mukhang Diyos kaysa sa Ama?

Hindi lamang iyon, sinabi pa ni Ario na kung ang Diyos Ama at ang Anak ay parehong Diyos, kung gayon ay may dalawang diyos, na nangangahulugang ang Cristianismo ay hindi isang monoteistikong relihiyon." (*Ancient and Medieval History*, p. 394)**

Ang sumagot sa mga katanungan ni Ario ay si Alejandro, obispo sa Alejandria, na "hagbigay ng isang serye ng mga sermon na marili ng naniniwala si Jesucristo ang Walang Hanggang Diyos na nasa anyo ng isang tao at anomang kasalungat na paniniwala ay dapat ituring na erehiya" (*When Jesus Became God*, p. 56*).

Ngunit hindi natinag si Ario; bagkus ay tinuligsa niya ang sermon ni Alejandro:

"Ang isa sa mga presbitero, si Ario, isang asetikong iskolar at bantog na mangangaral, ay inatake ang sermon sapagkat naniniwala siya ... na si Cristo ay may kakaibang esensiya o kasiyagaan kaysa sa Ama. Dahil sa kalinisan ng kaniyang buhay at sa pagsunod sa kalooban ng Diyos, si Cristo ay dapat ituring na banal. Subalit naniniwala si Ario na si Cristo ay isang nilalang, nilikha mula sa wala, mababa kaysa sa Ama at may esensiya iba sa Ama. Hindi Siya kapantay ng Ama. Para kay Ario, si Cristo ay banal subalit hindi Diyos." (*Christianity Through the Centuries*, pp. 143–144)**

Ang kontrobersiya ay "lalong lumubha" at "ang mga kalaban ni Ario ay gumawa ng isang kredo—ang Kompesyon ng Ortodoxiya—na iniharap kay Ario at sa kaniyang mga tagatangkilik na kalakip ang kahilingan na ito ay kanilang lagdaan. Nang ito ay kanilang tinanggihan, *itiniwalag sila ng konsilyo at pinalayas sila sa Alejandria*" (*When Jesus Became God*, pp. 56–57)*.

Hindi natuldukan ang hidwaan nang itiwalag si Ario at ang kaniyang mga tagasuporta. Sa katanungan, "ang hidwaang panlokal ay isa na ngayong panrehiyon at, ayon sa mga eksperto sa teoloziya, ay malamang na kumalat sa buong daigdig ng Mediteraneo. *Ang matataas at iginagalang na pinuno ng Iglesia ay nagtaglay ng lubhang magkakasalungat na paninindigan*" (*Ibid.*, p. 46*).

Ang mga pangyayaring ito ay nagbunsod kay Constantino, ang Emperador Romano noon, na makialam—subalit ang kaniyang motibo ay hindi upang maresolba ang usaping panteoloziya, kundi upang isalba ang kaniyang imperyo mula sa pagkakawatak-watak:

"Lubhang maingat si Constantino para tangkain niyang ilabas sa batas ang mga kalaban ng kaniyang relihiyon, na kinabibilangan pa ng mayorya sa mga mamamayang Romano. Subalit walang anumang hadlang para paboran niya ang Iglesia kung paanong ang mga sinundan niya ay pinaburang matandang relihiyon. ... **Ang tunay niyang layunin**, higit pa sa pagpabor sa kaniyang mga kareliliyon, ay upang pag-isahin ang iba't iba at magkakaaway na mga tao ng imperyo upang bumuo ng isang malaking samahang ukol sa Espiritu." (*Ibid.*, p. 46*)**

Bilang pagsang-ayon sa mungkahi ni Hosius ng Cordova, nagpatawag si Constantino ng isang konsilyo sa Nicaea, na siya mismo ang nanguna at nagbayad pa ng gugulin nito:

"Sumunod, tinawag ni Constantino ang isang konsilyo ng mga Obispo upang lutasin ang hidwaan. Ang konsilyong ito ay nagpulong sa Nicea sa mga unang araw ng tag-init ng 325. Tatlong daang Obispo ang dumalo, subalit di lalabis sa sampa ang nagmula sa kanlurang bahagi ng imperyo. Ang Emperador ang namuno sa konsilyo at siyang nagbayad ng gugulin nito. Sa unang pagkakataon, **nasumpungan ng iglesia ang kaniyang sarili na pinangingibabawan ng liderato pampulitika ng pangulo ng estado**." (*Christianity Through the Centuries*, p. 143*)**

Nakatawag-pansin sa ilang historiador na bagama't si Constantino ay "walang anumang pagkaunawa sa mga katanungang pinag-uusapan sa teoloziyang Griego" (*A Short History of Christian Doctrine*, p. 51),** "iginiit [niya] na ang lahat ng obispo na dumalo ay dapat iendorso ang isang bagong kredo na nagpapahayag na si Cristo ay Diyos at kumukondena kay Ario. Sinumang hindi lalagda sa dokumentong ito ay ititiwalag at ipatatapon" (*The Jesus Establishment*, p. 173*).

Ang di-pagtanggap sa nasabing kredo o pahayag ng pananampalataya ay itinuring, hindi lamang bilang isang erehiya, kundi isang krimen laban sa estado:

"Sa sandaling ang Kredo ay hayagang nalagdaan ng lahat ng mga obispo at naipahayag ni Constantino, yaon ay naging opisyal na kredo para sa lahat ng Cristiano. **Ang pagtatatuwa sa pagkadiyos ni Cristo** sa anumang kaparaanan ay katumbas na rin ng kusang paghiwalay ng tao sa komunidad ng mga Cristiano at **isang krimen laban sa estado**." (*The Emerging Church*, p. 110*)**

Nakalulungkot, gaya ng pahayag ng isang manunulat, na sa pagpapasiya ng Iglesia Katolika na iturong si Cristo ay Diyos, "kinondena nito ang tama at iningatan ang mali" (*The Jesus Establishment*, pp. 175–176).**

Hindi na dapat ipagtaka na ang isang pinuno, tulad ni Constantino, ay nakipag-alyansa sa mga bulaang tagapagturo

ng relihiyon upang bumuo ng isang hidwang aral. Bago pumanaw si Apostol Pablo, nagbigay siya ng babala sa mga unang Cristiano:

"Alam kong pagkaalis ko'y magsisipasok ang mababangis na asong-gubat at walang patawid na sisilain ang kawan. Mula na rin sa inyo'y bilitaw ang mga taong magsasalita ng kasinungalingan upang mapasunod ang mga alagad, at sa gayo'y mailigaw sila." (Gawa 20:29-30 Magandang Balita Biblia*)

Ang mga 'asong-gubat' na ito ay tumutukoy sa mga bulaang propeta (Mat. 7:15) at maging sa mga pinuno ng pamahalaan:

Ang mga pinuno nila'y parang hayok na asong-gubat kung lumapa ng kanilang biktima. Sila'y walang awang pumapatay upang yumaman." (Ezek. 22:27 MB*)

Noon pa man ay nagpahayag din ng pangamba si Apostol Pablo na ang malinis na pag-iisip ng mga Cristiano tungkol kay Cristo ay pasasamain:

"Nguni't ako'y natatakot, baka sa anomang paraan, kung paanong si Eva ay nadaya ng ahas sa kaniyang katusuhan, ang inyong walang malay at malinis na mga pagiisip na kay Cristo ay pasamain. Sapagka't kung yaong paririto ay mangaral ng ibang Jesus, na hindi namin ipinangaral, o kung kayo'y nagsisitanggap ng ibang espiritu na hindi ninyo tinanggap, o ibang evangelio na hindi ninyo tinanggap, ay mabuting pagtiisan ninyo." (II Cor. 11:3-4*)

Ang magpapasama ng pag-iisip o paniniwala ng mga Cristiano tungkol kay Cristo ay yaong mangangaral ng "ibang Jesus" na hindi ipinangaral ng mga apostol—ng Jesus na diumano'y Diyos, taliwas sa "tao" na kanilang ipinangaral at sinampalatayan ng mga unang Cristiano.

Upang hindi mawalang-kabuluhan ang ating pagsamba at paglilingkod sa Diyos, hindi tayo dapat sumunod o sumampalataya sa mga aral ng tao (Mat. 15:9), gaya ng turong si Cristo diumano ay Diyos, na "ibang ebanghelyo" kaya dapat itakwil (Gal. 1:6-9). Ang pagtatamo ng buhay na walang hanggan ay nakasalig sa pagsampalataya at panghahawak sa mga katotohanang itinuro ni Cristo, na ang isa ay ang Kaniyang sinabi nang Siya'y manalangin sa Ama: "At ito ang buhay na walang hanggan—ang makilala Ka nila, Ikaw na kaisa-isang tunay na Dios" (Juan 17:3 Salita ng Buhay*).

* Idinagdag ang pagdiriin

** Isinalin mula sa Ingles

Dennis C. Lovendin
Editor-in-Chief

Isang diyos ba ang kailangang matatay upang mabayaran ang kasalanan ng mga tao?

Ni JENSEN DG. MAÑEBOG

MAY MGA TUMUTULIGSA sa Iglesia Ni Cristo na ginagamit ang paksang kaligtasan para patunayan na mali raw ang turo nito na si Cristo ay tao at hindi Diyos. Katuwiran nila, "Kung si Jesus ay tao lamang at hindi Diyos, papaanong magiging sapat ang Kaniyang kamatayan para mabayaran ang mga kasalanan ng maraming tao sa buong mundo?"

Naniriwala sila na isang diyos—hindi tao—ang makapagbabayad sa ganoon karaming kasalanan; kaya si Cristo, na diumano'y Diyos, ay kinailangang magkatawang-tao para matatay at matubos ang mga kasalanan ng mga tao.

Ang storyline o naratibong ito ay maaaring masarap pakigangan, ngunit naaayon kaya sa mga aral ng Biblia?

Hindi biblical

Ang paniniwala na magiging sapat lamang ang kamatayan ni Cristo bilang pambayad sa maraming kasalanan kung Siya ay Diyos ay wala sa Biblia. Ito ay tuwiran pa ngang sumasalungat sa pagtuturo ng Banal na Kasulatan tungkol sa Diyos, sa kaligtasan, at sa itinalaga ng Diyos na Tagapagligtas.

Ayon sa Biblia, ang Diyos ay imortal o "walang kamatayan" (I Tim. 1:17), kaya't hindi Siya maaaring matatay sa anumang dahilan o layunin. Ang aral na si Jesus ay Diyos na nagkatawang-tao ay tuwirang salungat naman sa doktrina ng Biblia na "Ang Dios ay hindi tao" (Blg. 23:19) at sa Kaniya ay "walang pagbabago, ni kahit anino man ng pagiba" (Sant. 1:17).

“
**Sapagkat gayon na lamang ang pag-ibig
ng Diyos sa sangkatauhan, kaya't ibinigay niya
ang kanyang kaisa-isang Anak, upang ang
sinumang sumampalataya sa kanya
ay hindi mapahamak, kundi magkaroon
ng buhay na walang hanggan.**
”

Juan 3:16 Magandang Balita Biblia 2012

Ang tunay na Diyos ay hindi pumapayag na maging tao. Maliwanag ang Kaniyang pahayag: "ako'y Dios, at hindi tao" (Ose. 11:9) at "ako, ang Panginoon, ay hindi nababago" (Mal. 3:6).

Ang totoo, ang paniniwala na may diyos na bumaba sa atin "sa anyo ng mga tao" (Gawa 14:11), isang paniniwalang pagano na matatagpuan halimbawa sa mitolohiya ng mga Griego, ay "walang kabuluhang bagay" at dapat talikuran, ayon sa mga apostol (Gawa 14:15 Magandang Balita Biblia 2012).

Samakatuwid, ang aral na si Jesus ay Diyos na kinailangang magkatawang-tao para mamatay ay *unbiblical* at *anti-scriptural* pa.

**Ang aral ng Biblia
tungkol sa kaligtasan**

Hinggil sa kaligtasan, ganito ang turo ng Biblia:

"Sapagkat gayon na lamang ang pag-ibig ng Diyos sa sangkatauhan, kaya't ibinigay niya ang kanyang kaisa-isang Anak, upang ang sinumang sumampalataya sa kanya ay hindi mapahamak, kundi magkaroon ng buhay na walang hanggan." (Juan 3:16 MB2012)

Upang magkaroon ang tao ng pagkakataon na magtamo ng buhay

na walang hanggan, "ibinigay [ng Diyos] ang kanyang kaisa-isang Anak." Pansinin na hindi sinabi ng Biblia na "ibinigay ng Diyos ang Kaniyang sarili." Maliwanag na ang ibinigay o isinugo ng Diyos para sa kaligtasan ng tao ay hindi ang Diyos mismo, kundi ang Kaniyang Anak, si Jesucristo.

Ang kalagayan ni Cristo

Tungkol sa likas na kalagayan (*state of being*) ni Cristo, Siya mismo ang may turo na Siya ay isang "taong ... nagsay-say ng katotohanan" (Juan 8:40). Kaya naman malinaw na itinuro ng mga apostol na ang namatay sa krus ay hindi Diyos, gaya ng iniiisip ng iba, kundi isang tao:

"Mga taga-Israel, pakinggan ninyo ang mga pangungusap na ito. Si Jesus na taga-Nazaret, **taong** pinatunayan sa inyo ng Diyos sa pamamagitan ng mga himala, kababalaghan at kata-ka-takang mga bagay na ginawa ng Diyos sa piling ninyo sa kaparaanan niya, gaya nga ng inyong nalalaman; siya na ipinagkanulo sang-ayon sa takdang pasya at pagkaalam ng Diyos sa mula't mula pa, ay inyong **ipinako sa krus** at **ipinapatay** sa kamay ng mga timplasan." (Gawa 2:22-23 Abriol, idinagdag ang pagdiriin)

Ang katotohanang itinuturo ng Biblia na si Jesus ay namatay (Juan

19:30, 33) ay lalong nagpapatunay na Siya nga ay tao at hindi Diyos—sapagkat ang Diyos, hindi gaya ng tao, ay hindi kailanman namamatay ("never dies") (I Tim. 1:17 New Living Translation).

Pansinin din na kung ang Anak ay Diyos din, gaya ng Kaniyang Ama, lilitaw na dalawa ang Diyos—isang paniniwala na talibwas sa itinuturo ni Cristo mismo na isaa lamang ang tunay na Diyos, ang Ama sa langit (Juan 17:3, 1).

Isang cheap na sakripisyo?

May mga nagsasabi na kung tao lamang at hindi Diyos si Cristo, lilitaw umano na ang Kaniyang kamatayan para sa kaligtasan ng sangkatauhan ay isang napakaliit o *cheap* na sakripisyo lamang sa panig ng Diyos. Katuwiran nila, "Kung si Cristo ay tao lamang, na pinabanal ng Ama at pagkatapos ay inialay para mamatay sa krus, napakaliit na bagay at parang wala lang ito sa Diyos, sapagkat maaari Siyang lumikha ng isang milyong taong katulad nito." Ang pagmamatuwid na ito ay mali batay sa aral ng Biblia.

Una, dapat tandaan na tanging si Cristo lamang ang tinawag ng Biblia na "bugtong na Anak" ng Diyos (Juan 3:16) at sinabihan Niya na, "Ito ang sinisinta kong Anak, na siya kong lubos na kinalulugdan" (Mat. 3:17). Kaya, ang sabihing napakaliit o *cheap* na sakripisyo lang sa panig ng Diyos ang pag-aalay ng buhay ng Kaniyang sinisinta at "kaisa-isang Anak" dahil tao sa likas na kalaganan si Cristo ay isang *highly subjective* na opinyon lamang.

Ikalawa, ang pahayag na ang kaligtasan ay napaka-*cheap* kung ang namatay sa krus ay hindi Diyos

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ay tahasang pangungwestiyon sa pamamaraan at kabutihan ng Diyos. Sapagkat tulad nga ng itinuturo ng Biblia, ang kahayagan ng dakilang pag-ibig ng Diyos sa sangkatauhan” ay ito: “ibinigay niya ang kanyang kaisa-isang Anak”—hindi ang Kaniyang sarili—para sa kaligtasan ng Iisus (Juan 3:16 MB2012).

Pansinin na hindi rin sinabi na ang ibinigay Niya ay “isa pang Diyos”—bagay na talagang hindi ituturo ng Biblia sapagkat malinaw ang aral nito na iisa lamang ang Diyos, ang Ama (I Cor. 8:6) at maliban sa Kaniya ay walang iba” (Isa. 46:9; 63:16).

Hindi gaya natin

Tandaan din na si Cristo, hindi gaya ng lahat ng iba pang mga tao, ay napakadakila—Siyá ang tanging tao na pinadakila upang maging Prinsipe at Tagapaglitgas (Gawa 5:31), ginawang Panginoon (Gawa 2:36), Tagapamagitan (I Tim. 2:5), at ang lahat ng kapangyarihan sa langit at sa lupa ay ibinigay sa Kaniya (Mat. 28:18). Ngunit, sa kabilang mga karangalan at kapangyarihang ito na sa Kaniya lamang ibinigay, nanatili Siyang mapagpukkaba at lubos na nagmasunurin sa Kaniyang Ama (Filip. 2:8). Tunay nga, si Cristo ang “bugtong na Anak ng Dios” (Juan 3:18) na lubos Niyang iniibig at kinalulug-dan (Mat. 3:17).

Kung isasaalang-alang ang lahat ng ito, pati ang katotohanang si Jesus ay hindi kailangan lumabag sa kalooban ng Kaniyang Ama at hindi nagkasala (I Ped. 2:21-22) “tulad ng korderong walang dungis at kapintasan” (I Ped. 1:19 MB2012), tanging ang walang puso at matigas ang kalooban lamang ang magsasabing ang matinding pagdurusa at marahas

“
At dahil sinunod niya ang kalooban ng Diyos, tayo ay ginawang banal ni Jesu-Cristo sa pamamagitan ng minsanang paghahandog ng kanyang sarili, at iyon ay sapat na.

”

Hebreo 10:10 Magandang Balita Biblia 2012

na kamatayan na dinanas ni Cristo ay “wala lang” at maliit na sakripisyó lamang sa panig ng Kaniyang nagmamahal na Ama.

Iyon ay sapat na’

Ang kamatayan ni Cristo ay kahayagan ng dakilang pag-ibig ng Diyos sa mga tao:

“Dito nahayag ang pagibig ng Dios sa atin, sapagka’t sinugo ng Dios ang kaniyang bugtong na Anak sa sanglibutan upang tayo'y mabuhay sa pamamagitan niya. Narito ang pagibig, hindi sa tayo'y umibig sa Dios, kundi siya ang umibig sa atin, at sinugo ang kaniyang Anak na pangpalubagloob sa ating mga kasalanan.” (I Juan 4:9-10)

Tootoo na bilang Makapang-yarihan sa lahat, ang Diyos ay makalilikha ng isang milyong Cristo o higit pa; ngunit ang katotohanan na iisang Cristo lamang ang Kaniyang nilikha (Gawa 13:23) ay naghahaya ng na ito ang Kaniyang kalooban at naaayon sa Kaniyang banal na panukala at karunungan (I Cor. 2:2, 7 MB; Efe. 3:9, 11 MB).

Ang paniniwala na ang kamatayan ng isang hindi Diyos, ng “taong si Cristo Jesus” (I Tim. 2:5), ay hindi sapat na kahayagan ng pagmamahal ng Diyos sa sangkatauhan, bukod sa hindi biblikal, ay napakala-

king insulto sa dakilang pag-ibig ng Diyos at ni Cristo para sa mga taong nangangailangan ng kaligtasan:

“... ang sarili niyang Anak ay hindi nya ipinakait, sa halip ay ibinigay para sa ating lahat ...” (Roma 8:32 MB2012)

“At dahil sinunod niya ang kalooban ng Diyos, tayo ay ginawang banal ni Jesu-Cristo sa pamamagitan ng minsanang paghahandog ng kanyang sarili, at iyon ay sapat na.” (Heb. 10:10 MB2012)

Malinaw na ayon sa kalooban ng Diyos mismo, hindi Diyos ang kailangang matatay para sa ating kaligtasan, kundi isang tao, na si Cristo—at ang Kaniyang minsanang paghahandog ng Kaniyang sarili, ayon sa Biblia, “ay sapat na.” Ang pagmamaliit sa pamamaraang ito ng Diyos sa pagliligtas sa mga tao ay paghamak sa “mahalang dugo ni Cristo” (I Ped. 1:18-19 MB2012) na Kaniyang ipinantubos sa Kaniyang Iglesia:

“Ingatan ninyo kung gayon ang inyong sarili at ang buong kawan na rito'y hinirang kayo ng Espíritu Santo na mga katiwala, upang pakain ang iglesia ni Cristo na binili niya ng kaniyang dugo.” (Gawa 20:28 Lamsa Translation, isinalin mula sa Ingles). ●

Dapat sundin ang kalooban ng Diyos para maligtas

BY ERICK S. DELA CRUZ

NILIKHA NG DIYOS ang tao para sa Kaniya. Nararapat lamang, kung gayon, na matugunan natin ang dahilan ng pagkakalikha sa bawat isa sa atin. Inaasahan ng Diyos na Siya ay ating paglilingkuran at sasambahin. At dahil sa Siya ang ating paglilingkuran, kinakailangang kung ano ang Kaniyang kalooban ang siyang dapat nating masunod. Ang pagtugon dito ay siya ring salalayan ng pagtatamo natin ng kaligtasan.

Hindi nila binigyan ng karangalan ang Diyos

Sa kabilang kanilang mga pagsisikap, hindi natupad ng maraming mga tao ang kalooban ng Diyos. Ganito ang patotoo ni Apostol Pablo sa Roma 1:21:

"Nakikilala nila ang Diyos, subalit hindi nila Siya binibigyan ng karangalan na para sa Kaniya, ni pinasasalamatan nila Siya. Sa halip,

ang kanilang mga pag-iisip ay naging lubos na walang katuturan, at ang kanilang walang laman na mga pag-iisip ay napuno ng kadiliman." (Magandang Balita Biblia)

Bagaman pinatotohanan ni Apostol Pablo na ang marami ay "Nakikilala nila ang Diyos, subalit," puna rin niya, "hindi nila Siya binibigyan ng karangalan na para sa Kaniya." Bagaman may ginagawa silang paglilingkod sa Diyos, kumikilala sila sa Kaniya, nagpapakita sila ng debosyon sa kagustuhang makatugon sa layunin ng Diyos sa paglalang sa tao, gayunma'y hindi nila Siya nabibigyan ng karangalan. Ito'y dahil "ang kanilang mga pag-iisip ay naging lubos na walang katuturan" at "napuno ng kadiliman." Malinaw na hindi nila napararangalan ang Diyos.

Para mabigyang-karangalan ang Diyos, kinakailangang kalooban

Niya ang masunod natin. Gaano kahalagang masunod natin kung ano ang kalooban Niya sa ating ginagawang paglilingkod sa Kaniya? Ganito ang itinuro ni Apostol Juan sa I Juan 2:3-5:

"Kung sinusunod natin kung ano ang sinabi ng Diyos na gawin natin, sa gayon ay natitiyak natin na tayo ay tunay na kumikilala sa Diyos. Sinasabi ng isang tao, 'Kumikilala ako sa Diyos!' Subalit kung ang taong iyon ay hindi naman sumusunod sa mga utes ng Diyos, kung gayon ang taong iyon ay isang sinungaling. Ang katotohanan ay wala sa kaniya. Subalit kapag ang isang tao ay sumusunod sa aral ng Diyos, kung gayon ang pag-ibig ng Diyos ay tunay na nakarating sa layunin nito sa taong iyon. Sa ganito natin nalalaman na tayo ay sumusunod sa Diyos." (Easy-to-Read Version 1999 Edition)*

“
Nakikilala nila ang Diyos, subalit hindi nila Siya binibigyan ng karanganan na para sa Kaniya, ni pinasasalamatang nila Siya. Sa halip, ang kanilang mga pag-iisip ay naging lubos na walang katuturan, at ang kanilang walang laman na mga pag-iisip ay napuno ng kadiliman.
”

Roma 1:21 Magandang Balita Biblia

Ang sabi ni Apostol Juan, tunay ang pagkilala natin sa Diyos “kung sinusunod natin kung ano ang sinabi ng Diyos na gawin natin.” Ito ang dapat nating matiyak upang mapatunayan natin ang ating pagkilala sa Kaniya. Nagagawa ba natin kung ano ang sinasabi Niyang dapat nating gawin upang mabigyan natin Siya ng karanganan? Ano ang kasamaan kung sinasabi natin na kilala natin Siya, pinaglilingkuran natin Siya subalit hindi naman natin nasusunod kung ano ang Kaniyang sinasabi? Ang sabi sa Biblia, “Ang taong iyon ay sinungaling.” Ang kabutihan naman kapag nasunod natin kung ano ang Kaniyang sinasabi ay ang “pag-ibig ng Diyos ay tunay na nakarating” sa atin.

Ang kalooban ng Diyos para sa mga tao

Ano ang kalooban o layunin ng Diyos para sa lahat ng tao? Ganito ang pagtuturo ni Apostol Pablo sa Efeso 1:9–10:

“Ipinagkaloob niya sa atin ang lubos at maliwanag na pagkaunawa at kaalaman sa bukas na lihim ng kaniyang kalooban, na nagpapakita sa atin kung paanong ang layuning iyon ng kaniyang panukala upang isaayos iyon sa kalubusan ng mga panahon na ang lahat ng bagay kapuwa sa langit

at sa lupa ay dapat tipunin kay Cristo” (Moffatt Translation)*

Ayon kay Apostol Pablo, kalooban at panukala ng Diyos na ang “lahat ng bagay kapuwa sa langit at sa lupa ay dapat tipunin kay Cristo.” Matutupad ng tao ang panukalang ito ng Diyos kapag siya ay napabilang sa o naging miyembro ng katawan ni Cristo:

“Kung paanong ang mga bahaging pisikal na katawan ng tao ay may iba’t ibang tungkulin, gayundin naman ang mga miyembro ng katawan ni Cristo, ang Iglesia, ay may iba’t ibang tungkulin, gayunman tayong lahat ay kabilang sa iisang iglesia.” (Roma 12:4–5 International English Bible)*

Ang Iglesia ay ang katawan ni Cristo. Hindi marami ang Iglesia na pinanukala ng Diyos na dapat nating kabilangan. Malinaw na itinuro ng mga apostol: “Tayong lahat ay kabilang sa iisang Iglesia.” Ang Iglesia na roon dapat matipon o mapabilang ang lahat ay walang iba kundi ang Iglesia na itinayo ni Cristo:

“Kaya nga sinasabi ko sa iyo, ikaw ay Pedro. Itatayo ko ang aking iglesia sa ibabaw ng batong ito. Hindi malulupig ng kapangyarihan ng kamatayan ang aking iglesia.” (Mat. 16:18 ETRV)*

Si Cristo ay nagtayo ng Iglesia—ang Iglesiangan kinikilala Niyang Kaniya. Maliban sa Iglesiangan

Kaniyang itinayo, wala nang iba pa na kinikilala Niyang Kaniya.

Ang Iglesiangan itinayo at pag-aari ni Cristo ay tinitiyak Niyang hindi mapananaigan ng kamatayan—ang ikalawang kamatayan sa dagat-dagatang apoy.

Ang pangalan ng Iglesiangan itinayo ng ating Panginoong Jesucristo ay binanggit ng mga apostol sa Gawa 20:28:

“Ingatan ninyo kung gayon ang inyong sarili at ang buong kawan na rito'y hinirang kayo ng Espiritu Santo na mga katiwala, upang pakainin ang iglesia ni Cristo na binili niya ng kaniyang dugo.” (Lamsa Translation)*

Samakatuwid, sa *Iglesia Ni Cristo* dapat mapabilang ang tao para magawa niya ang kalooban ng Diyos na ang bawat isa ay dapat na matipon kay Cristo. Sa Iglesiangan ito magagawa ng tao ang paglilingkod na katanggap-tanggap sa Diyos at magdudulot ng karanganan sa Kaniya, sapagkat ito ang ayon sa Kaniyang kalooban.

Dapat pumasok sa Iglesia Ni Cristo

Ano ang ipinag-uutos ni Cristo upang ang mga tao ay matipon sa Kaniya na iyon ang kalooban ng Diyos? Ito ang pahayag mismo ni Cristo sa Juan 10:29, 28, 7 at 9:

“

**Kaya nga sinasabi ko
sa iyo, ikaw ay Pedro.
Itatayo ko ang aking
iglesia sa ibabaw
ng batong ito.
Hindi malulupig
ng kapangyarihan
ng kamatayan
ang aking iglesia.**

”

Mateo 16:19 Easy-to-Read Version,
isinalin mula sa Ingles

Ang aking Ama na nagbigay sa kanila sa akin ay higit na dakila sa lahat at walang kayang umagaw sa kanila mula sa pangangalaga ng Ama.

Binibigyan ko sila ng walang hanegang buhay at sila ay hindi kailangan malilipol; walang aagaw sa kanila mula sa aking pangangalaga.

Kaya muling nagsalita si Jesus: Buong katotohanang sinasabi ko sa inyo. Ako ang pintuan ng kulungan ng mga tupa. ... Ako ang pintuan; ang sinumang pumasok sa loob ng kawan sa pamamagitan ko ay maliligtas. ..." (Revised English Bible)*

Ipinag-uutos ni Cristo na ang sinumang ibig maligtas ay dapat pumasok sa Kaniya bilang pintuan. Ito ay buong katotohanan na dapat sampalatayanan.

Nakapasok na ba kay Cristo ang tao kung tinanggap na niya Siya na Tagapagligtas o sumasampalataya siya kay Cristo? Hindi. Ang mga tunay na nakapasok kay Cristo na Siyang pintuan ay nasa loob ng kawan na ito'y ang *Iglesia Ni Cristo* (Gawa 20:28 Lamsa).

Ano ang garantiya ni Cristo sa sinumang pumasok sa kawan o *Iglesia Ni Cristo*? Magtataomo

sila ng kaligtasan at ng walang hanegang buhay. Samakatuwid, may ipinapagawa sa atin upang tayo ay maligtas. Hindi matatamo ng tao ang kaligtasan ng dahil sa impluwensiya, salapi o karunungan. Ito ay matatamo ng tao kapag siya ay pumasok sa loob ng kawan o *Iglesia Ni Cristo*.

Ano pang dakilang biyaya ang matatamo ng tao kapag siya ay nasa loob ng *Iglesia Ni Cristo*? Ito ang itinuro ni Apostol Pablo sa Hebreo 12:22–23:

“Subalit nakarating na kayo sa katorohan (na rito lamang nakatutok ang mga simbolo), sa Bundok ng Sion, ang Bagong Jerusalem—ang makalangit na lungsod ng Diyos na buhay—at kayo ay bahagi ng lungsod na iyon. Nakisama kayo sa milyun-milyong anghel na nagdiriwang sa harapan ng Diyos, sa makalangit na santuwaryo—ang tunay na iglesia ni Cristo—na ang mga pagkakakilanlan ay nakaimbak sa langit. Nakarating na kayo sa Diyos—ang pinagmumulan at pamantayan ng katuwiran para sa lahat ng tao; sa iningatang mga pansariling katangian ng mga taong matuwid na napanauling lubos sa pagkataong tulad ng kay Cristo.” (Remedy New Testament)*

Binabanggit sa siniping talata ang mga taong nakarating na sa katotohanan. Makararating ang tao sa katotohanan sa pamamagitan ng pagsunod sa uts ng Diyos at ng ating Panginoong Jesucristo. Ang isa sa mga katotohanang dapat masunod ng tao sa kaniyang ikaliligtas ay ang kalooban ng Diyos at uts ni Cristo na pumasok sa *Iglesia Ni Cristo*.

Gaano kahalaga na ang tao ay makasunod sa katotohanang ito? Magiging bahagi na siya ng makalangit na lungsod ng Diyos—ang

Bayang Banal. Sinabi pa sa kanila: “Nakarating na kayo sa Diyos.” Kung gayon, ang makararating sa piling ng Diyos ay ang mga pumasok at napakanatili sa loob ng tunay na *Iglesia Ni Cristo*. Ito ang dahilan kung bakit sinisikap naming mga kaanib ng *Iglesia Ni Cristo* na makapanatili rito. Ito ang tunay na Iglesiang ikapagtatamo ng karapatang maligtas at makarating sa langit. Bakit ang banggit ay “tunay na iglesia ni Cristo”? Sapagkat mayroong hindi tunay na iglesia. Iyon ay ang mga hindi itinayo ni Cristo. Hindi rin sila sa Diyos, at sa mga iyon ay walang kaligtasan at buhay na walang hanggan.

Ano ang pasiya ng Diyos sa sinumang hindi ginawa kung ano ang kalooban ng Diyos? Ganito ang babala ng Biblia:

“Sapagkat wala akong panangutang hatulan ang mga nasa labas ng iglesia ni Cristo ... Ang Diyos ang Siyang hahatol sa mga nasa labas ng Iglesia. Iniuutos sa atin ng mga kasulatan na, ‘Dapat ninyong alisin ang masamang tao sa gitna ninyo.’” (I Cor. 15:12–13 Unlocked Dynamic Bible)*

Ang mga nasa labas ng Iglesia ay hahatulan. Ang Diyos ang hahatol sa kanila pagdating ng Araw ng Paghuhukom. Ayaw natin na tayo ay mapahamak. Hangad natin na makarating sa piling ng Diyos. Magawa nawa natin kung ano ang Kaniyang kalooban para sa ating lahat upang tayo ay maligtas. ●

*Isinalin mula sa Ingles

Batay sa leksiyong itinuro ng Kapatid na Eduardo V. Manalo, Tagapamahalang Pangkalahanan, sa pagsambang kanilang pinangasiwaan sa Saitama, Japan noong Hunyo 2, 2019

Si Cristo ba ay Diyos ayon sa Isaias 9:6?

Ni KENNETH A. OUANO

SINASABI NG MGA NAGTUTURO na Diyos daw ang Panginoong Jesucristo na sa Matandang Tipan ay binanggit na umano na ang Kaniyang likas na kalagayan ay Diyos. Sinisitas nila ang Isaias 9:6, isang hula tungkol sa isang batang ipanganganak na aatangan ng pamamahala. Ganito ang nilalaman ng hula:

"Sapagka't sa atin ay ipinanganak ang isang bata, sa atin ay ibinigay ang isang anak na lalake; at ang pamamahala ay maaatang sa kaniyang balikat; at ang kaniyang pangalan ay tatawaging Kamanghamangha, Tagapayo, Makapangyarihang Dios, Walang hanggang Ama, Pangulo ng Kapayapaan."

Ang batang isisilang o anak na lalaki na tinutukoy sa hula ay ang Panginoong Jesucristo. Subalit may mga tagapangaral na nagtuturo na ang banggit na "Makapangyarihang Diyos" sa talata ay tumutukoy raw kay Cristo, kaya ipinalagay nilang Diyos ang Panginoong Jesucristo. Tama ba ang gayong pakahulugan sa talata?

Ang Anak ay hindi ang Ama

Ang katawagang "Makapangyarihang Diyos" sa talata ay hindi tumutukoy sa likas na kalagayan ni Cristo o ng hinuhulaang anak na batang lalaki. Paano ito matitiyak? Mahalagang suriin ang pagkakasalin mula sa orihinal na wikang Hebreo upang maging malinaw ang nilalaman ng talata. Sa Bibliang Ingles na inilimbag ng *Jewish Publications Society of America* (JPSA) [na roon ito ay Isaias 9:5] ay ganito ang nakasulat:

"For a child is born unto us, A son is given unto us; And the government is upon his shoulder; And his name is called Pele-joez-el-gibbor-Abi-ad-sar-shalom." (The Holy Scriptures According to the Masoretic Text, 1917 edition)

Sa sinipi ay may binabanggit na "name"—Pele-joez-el-gibbor-Abi-ad-sar-shalom. Ang literal na pagkakasalin ng mahabang pangalang Hebreo na ito sa Ingles ayon sa footnote ng nasabing Biblia ay "Wonderful in counsel is God the Mighty, the everlasting Father, the Ruler of peace." Sa Filipino,

"Kamanghamangha sa Pagpapayo ang Diyos na Makapangyarihan, ang Walang Hanggang Ama, ang Pinuno ng Kapayapaan."

Ang "God the Mighty" o Makapangyarihang Diyos, katulad din ng "everlasting Father" o Walang hanggang Ama at iba pa, ay bahagi lamang ng pangalang itinawag sa pamamahalaan maaatang sa balikat ng batang hinulaan. Ang isang katunayan na ang pangalang iyon ay sa pamamahala tumutukoy ay ang nakasulat sa *Moffatt Translation* ng Biblia, na sinasabi na iyon ay isang "titulo":

"For a child has been born to us, a son has been given to us; the royal dignity he wears, and this the title that he bears—'A wonder of a counsellor, a divine hero, a father of all time, a peaceful prince!'"

Ang titulo ay hindi tumutukoy sa likas na kalagayan kundi sa tungkulin ng pinagkakapitan nito. Kung tatanggapin ang hinuhulaang anak na lalaki ay Siyang tinutukoy na "Makapangyarihang Diyos," kailangan ding tanggapin na Siya rin ang tinutukoy na "Walang

Hanggang Ama" sapagkat pinatutunayan ng Biblia na ang Diyos na Makapangyarihan sa lahat (Gen. 35:11) ay ang iisang Ama na manlalalang (Mal. 2:10). Subalit, ang hinulaan sa Isaias 9:6 ay anak at hindi Ama. Kaya, nagkakamali ang mga nagkokonklusyon na Diyos ang Panginoong Jesucristo dahil sa nakasulat sa talatang ito.

Kung tatanggapin ang konklusyon na Diyos ang Panginoong Jesucristo dahil sa maling pagkawnawa sa nakasulat sa Isaias 9:6, dapat sana sa katuparan ay tinawag si Jesucristo na Ama. Subalit ang Panginoong Jesucristo ay ipinakikilala ng Biblia hindi bilang Ama, kundi "Anak," at ang Ama ay ang Diyos na nasa langit:

"At nang mabautismuhan si Jesus, pagdaka'y umahon sa tubig; at narito, nangabuksan sa kaniya ang mga langit, at nakita niya ang Espiritu ng Dios na bumababang tulad sa isang kalapati, at lumalapag sa kaniya; At narito, ang isang tinig na mula sa mga langit, na nagsasabi, Ito ang sinisinta kong Anak, na siya kong lubos na kinalulugdan." (Mat. 3:16-17)

Kapangyarihang ibinigay ng Diyos kay Cristo

Bakit kabilang ang katawagang "Makapangyarihang Diyos" sa hula tungkol sa Panginoong Jesucristo kung hindi naman pala Siya ang Diyos? Tandaan na ang "Makapangyarihang Diyos" sa talata ay bahagi lamang ng buong pangalang itatawag sa pamamahalang iaatang sa

“
**For a child is born
unto us, A son
is given unto us;
And the government
is upon his shoulder;
And his name is called
Pele-joez-el-gibbor-
Abi-ad-sar-shalom.**
”

Isaiah 9:6 The Holy Scriptures
According to the Masoretic Text,
1917 Edition

hinuhulaang anak o si Cristo. Si Cristo mismo ang nagsabi na ang lahat ng kapamahalaan ay ibinigay sa Kaniya ng Makapangyarihang Diyos na Kaniyang Ama:

"At lumapit si Jesus sa kanila at sila'y kaniyang kinausap, na sinasabi, Ang lahat ng kapamahalaan sa langit at sa ibabaw ng lupa ay naibigay na sa akin." (Mat. 28:18)

"Lumapit si Jesus at sinabi sa kanila, 'Ibinigay na sa akin ang lahat ng kapangyarihan sa langit at sa lupa.' (Mat. 28:18 Magandang Balita Biblia)

"Ibinigay sa akin ng aking Ama ang lahat ng bagay. Walang

nakakikilala sa Anak kundi ang Ama, at walang nakakikilala sa Ama kundi ang Anak at yaong marapating pagpahayagan ng Anak." (Mat. 11:27 MB)

Samakatuwid, kaya El-Gibbor o Makapangyarihang Diyos ang isang bahagi ng pangalan ng pamamahala na initiang sa Panginoong Jesucristo ay sapagkat Siya ay binigyan ng kapangyarihan sa langit at lupa, at ang nagbigay nito sa Kaniya ay ang Ama, na Siyang Makapangyarihang Diyos. Maling isipin na si Cristo na hinulaan sa aklat ni Isaias ay Diyos sa likas na kalagayan. Ang Diyos na nagbigay ng kapangyarihan kay Cristo ay iba sa Cristong binigyan ng kapangyarihan mula sa Diyos. Diyos ang nagbigay ngunit hindi Diyos ang tumanggap nito.

Tao at hindi Diyos

Mismong ang propetang si Isaias ang nagpakilala sa likas na kalagayan ng Tagapagligtas na kaniyang hinulaan:

"Siya'y hinamak at itinakuwil ng mga tao; isang taong sa kapanglawan, at bihasa sa karamdamang: at gaya ng isa na pinagkublihan ng kanilang mukha ng mga tao, na siya'y hinamak, at hindi natin hinalagahan siya. Tunay na kaniyang dinala ang ating mga karamdamang, at dinala ang ating mga kapanglawan; gayon ma'y ating pinalagay siya na hinampas, sinaktan ng Dios, at dinalamhati." (Isa. 53:3-4)

Random notes

“
**Siya'y hinamak at
itinakuwil ng mga
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kapanglawan, at bihasa
sa karamdamian: at gaya
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ng kanilang mukha
ng mga tao, na siya'y
hinamak, at hindi natin
hinalagahan siya.**
 ”
 Isaías 53:3

Ang hinulaang “isang taong sa kapanglawan, at bihasa sa karamdamian” na hinamak at itinakuwil ng mga tao ay ang Panginoong Jesucristo. Hindi Diyos, kundi tao, ang likas na kalagayan ng Cristong hinulaan. Malinaw rin sa bahagi ng talata na nagsasaad, “siya na hinampas, sinaktan ng Dios, at dinalamhati,” na ang taong hinulaan ay hindi Diyos, kundi iba siya sa Diyos. Hindi maaaring ang tao ay maging Diyos (Ezek. 28:2) at hindi rin maaari na ang Diyos ay maging tao (Ose. 11:9).

Napakahalaga na tanggapin ng tao ang katotohanang aral ng Biblia na ang Panginoong Jesucristo ay tao at hindi Diyos. Si Cristo mismo ang nagsaysay ng katotohanang ito:

“Datapuwa't ngayo'y pinagsisikapan ninyo akong patayin, na taong sa inyo'y nagsaysay ng

katotohanan, na aking narinig sa Dios ...” (Juan 8:40)

Ang pagkaalam at pagsampa-lataya sa katotohanan ay ikabubuti ng tao dahil ito ang magdadala sa kaniya sa kaligtasan (I Tim. 2:3-4). Kaya, dapat alisin sa isip ng sinuman

ang maling paniniwala na Diyos ang Panginoong Jesucristo. Ang katotohanan tungkol sa Kaniyang kalikasan ay ang ipinahayag ni Cristo mismo, na Siya ay tao, kung gayon ay hindi Diyos. Ito ang katotohanang ikaliligtas ng tao. ●

New Testament speaks of 'Son of God' and never 'God the Son'

“The New Testament always speaks of the Son of God (task) and never of God the Son (status), that is the full co-equal deity is never taught in the New Testament.

“In the doxological formulae that Paul often uses to begin or end his epistles, the context is liturgical. But even here *God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ* (Galatians 1:3) are surely not spoken of as *God the Father and God the Son*. To Paul, *Theos* remains the ultimate horizon for faith in *Christos*. The central purpose of Paul in his epistles is not to prove that Jesus Christ is God but to invite people to share in the salvation wrought through him by God.” (*One Christ—Many Religions*, Samartha, S.J. New York: Orbis Books, 1991, p. 122)

“Peter did not claim that Jesus of Nazareth was God. He ‘was a man, commended to you by God by the miracles and portents and signs that God worked through him when he was among you’.” (*A History of God*. Armstrong, Karen. Great Britain: Mandarin Paperbacks, 1993, p. 107)

Inspiring Lives

A family bound by love and faith

By MARIE F. RUIZ



Brother Raymon and Sister Jhoana with their sons, Raj Matthew and Jared Luke

ONE HAILS FROM MAASIN in Southern Leyte, Philippines, while the other was born in Sta. Cruz, Manila. When their paths met, they realized they had similar experiences in life. Brother Raymon and Sister Jhoana Alis both came from devoted Catholic families, faced poverty at a young age, and found solace in the Iglesia Ni Cristo (Church Of Christ) in spite of being persecuted.

Brother Raymon, when still a young boy, climbed mountains to harvest coconuts and abaca leaf sheaths to sell. His family moved to Manila hoping for a better life, but they ended up in the slums of Parola in Tondo. Likewise, Sister Jhoana was only four years old when she and her older siblings collected kitchen waste food from neighbors to feed the pigs their family was raising to sell. Later on, they set up a rolling store they pushed around the marketplace selling fresh fruits and the garments their parents sewed. Her mother, Sister Minda Montellano, quipped, "Everything was always sold out because Jhoana would dance. She was so cute!"

A life-changing event

When Sister Jhoana's father, Brother Eugene, decided to join the Church Of Christ, Sister Minda was furious and threatened to leave him. But hearing the Church's radio

programs he regularly tuned in on, she eventually understood its teachings and converted.

Sister Jhoana's maternal grandmother was angered. She cut ties with them and no longer helped them. "But we weren't sad because we enjoyed the activities in the Church. And with God's grace, our parents' dress shop boomed. We had orders from as far as Cavite. Our eldest, Brother Joel, is now the resident minister of the Malibay Congregation in Pasay in the Ecclesiastical District of Makati. Jennet is a deaconess and Jeffrey is a head deacon in Loma de Gato, Bulacan South. We all finished college," Sister Jhoana said.

"But I developed low self-esteem because of poverty," Brother Raymon said, "I didn't get high grades because I had no extra money for projects and extracurricular activities."

In college, taking up Bachelor of Science in Office Administration, he served as a court stenographer for his practicum and gained employment there after graduation. Wanting a brighter future, he supported himself to become a lawyer and slowly overcame his low self-esteem.

Then, Brother Randy Serrano, a lawyer from that same court and a head deacon in the Church, established his own law firm and invited Brother Raymon to join him. Brother Randy also invited him to an evangelical mission. Gaining

interest, he signed up for Bible studies and was eventually baptized. At that time, he was already living independently from his parents. Upon visiting them to tell them of his conversion, "My mother got angry," he said.

Cradled by faith

"Jennet, my sister, their firm's secretary, was all praises for Raymon," Sister Jhoana said. But then, Sister Jhoana was still heartbroken from a long-distance relationship that didn't work out and just poured herself into her Church duties and work, including her stint at INC Radio in the mid-2010s handling the program, INC Kids Corner, and winning the KBP Golden Dove Awards for Best Radio Children's Program.

As their congregation's KADIWA president, Sister Jhoana invited Brother Raymon to their congregation's activities. Their friendship blossomed into love. Her family and all their friends, both members and nonmembers of the Church, were happy for them. Brother Raymon had already told his parents and siblings about Sister Jhoana a couple of times during his visits to them. So, when she accepted his love, he introduced her to them to pay respects and to let them know that they planned to get married after a year. They were quiet. Brother Raymon and Sister Jhoana felt some coldness in the way they were received.

"Why wait for a year? You're both getting old!" Brother Randy and Brother Eugene both exclaimed. Sister Jhoana's parents said they would sew all the suits and gowns for the entire wedding entourage for free. Brother Raymon and Sister Jhoana were pleasantly shocked.

Taken by this whirlwind of events, the young couple agreed on

an earlier wedding date. They immediately went to Parola to tell Brother Raymon's parents and siblings of this development. His mother was raging mad, while his father and siblings remained neutral.

At the chapel that night, Brother Raymon and Sister Jhoana were down on their knees in tears, praying for his mother to have a change of heart. The very next day, his sister contacted him saying that their mother was asking if they already had a photo and video coverage team for their wedding, and she would attend. Brother Raymon and Sister Jhoana were in tears of joy, thanking the Almighty God.

God's mercy

Brother Raymon and Sister Jhoana are blessed with two children—Raj Matthew, 9, and Jared Luke, 7—both *Pagsamba ng Kabataan* (PNK) or Children's Worship Service choir members. A few years back, while they were preparing to go to Tagaytay City in Cavite for Raj's birthday, Jared suddenly had a seizure. Raj rushed to him, calling out for help, forgetting about his birthday.

At the hospital, "Jared would only sleep in my arms. I couldn't rest even if I had work or a Church duty the following day," said Brother Raymon. "On worship service days, we changed to our deacon and deaconess uniforms in his hospital room or in the car. We couldn't control our tears at the worship service. We prayed fervently to God to heal Jared," Sister Jhoana said. Her father, a head deacon, did the anointing of oil for the sick. Their group overseer, together with some brethren, visited Jared and prayed for him until he got well.

During the Covid-19 lockdowns, Sister Jhoana said, "We both had no income, so we did online selling." Brother Raymon, though a lawyer, didn't mind posting items for sale on social media. They bought and delivered groceries for people in their area for a small fee. They were even able to help some of their relatives and others in need.

"We were also accommodating almost 30 brethren in our household worship services. The PNK Thanksgiving worship service was held here twice," Brother Raymon said. Sister Jhoana added, "We would buy grocery items on sale, so that my mother could cook meals for those who came and they could even bring home food."

An outpouring of God's blessings

Brother Raymon was able to establish his own law firm in about the same time when he and Sister Jhoana were being groomed as deacon and deaconess, respectively, in 2017 then sworn-in in 2018. He became a head deacon in 2019 and was also entrusted to be their district's *Buklod* president in 2021. They opened a coffee shop in 2022 and a pet shop in 2023. They are from the Local Congregation of Bagbaguin, Ecclesiastical District of CAMANAVA.

Whatever they go through in life, they keep to heart Brother Eduardo V. Manalo's constant advice to all the brethren. "He would always remind us to pray to God for help," Sister Jhoana said. Brother Raymon stressed, "The Executive Minister never fails to inspire us to stand firm in our calling and remain active in our Church duties for us to receive all of God's blessings." ●

Converts

I WAS BORN and raised in Pampanga by my devout Catholic parents. Every Sunday we'd go to mass together otherwise, they'd make sure that we have gone already by ourselves. I regarded what we were doing as piety—attending mass, joining religious processions, praying the rosary. I studied in a Catholic school from preschool to high school. I really didn't have any exposure with the Iglesia Ni Cristo (Church Of Christ), growing up.

I am a licensed geodetic engineer, but I shifted my career to computer programming and now I work as a freelance software developer with clients from countries outside the Philippines. Based on my interests, like science and technology and gadgets, I can say I am a logical person. I like thinking, I enjoy figuring out how things work.

The university where I went to in college, in Quezon City, is very near the INC Central Temple. I was invited to an evangelical mission (*pamamahayag*) at the Tabernacle. I remember I was in awe because that was my first time to enter the compound of Templo Central. I saw how beautiful the Temple is, especially up-close. That was the first time I was able to listen to the teachings of Iglesia Ni Cristo. I remember in my research about the Iglesia Ni Cristo, I started off being very skeptic. While listening to the lesson being taught by the minister, one of the things he mentioned is about the name of the true Church. Because I was skeptic, I thought back then, of course that was already written in the Bible. So, when the Iglesia Ni Cristo was regis-



BROTHER
**Aaron
Pamintuan
Tinio**

Pampanga, Philippines

**For me,
I can say that
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out experience.**

tered, I thought how convenient that is to use that same name.

I realized later on that less than one hour of the evangelical mission was not enough for me to get convinced. I figured there were a lot more written in the Bible that I want to know that's why I decided to be a doctrinal instructee at the Local Congregation of EGM Ave, in Angeles City, Pampanga. That was my turning point, after listening to all the lessons, and then realizing that if you filter out all of the religions based on the prophecies in the Bible, I realized that the Iglesia Ni Cristo is the true religion.

I think skeptically about all things, even with shopping or buying things, whatever it may be, I would always do my researches first. I will take time before deciding on anything. That is why when I began listening to the teachings upheld by the Iglesia Ni Cristo, I had that same thought process. What removed my doubts, while I was in the process of being a doctrinal instructee, was when I heard all the other doctrines upheld in the Iglesia Ni Cristo. Each time after every lesson, when I'm introduced to a new lesson, or I hear a new prophecy, when I get home, I'd use the internet right away. I would search questions like "What religions have been established during these times?" "What religions started in the far east?" "What religions believe that there is just one true God?" and many more. For every question, I would see it's not just the Iglesia Ni Cristo. But in my research, if I apply all of those prophecies, or what

I would call "filters," there is just one left—only the *Iglesia Ni Cristo*.

For me, I can say that my membership in the *Iglesia Ni Cristo* is a logical and a very well-thought-out experience. Everything I heard was read from the Bible. I've observed in the *Iglesia Ni Cristo* that the teaching remains the same, no matter who teaches it, whoever the minister assigned to preach the lesson is, wherever you attend. The lesson being taught in the worship service is the same in all congregations. Even for the Bible study done by those who want to join the Church, there is just one same set of lessons.

There were family members who told me not to renounce the Catholic beliefs about the Lord Jesus Christ, or Virgin Mary, which we have believed faithfully since we were young. That, in a sense I was turning my back on what I know growing up, and even turning my back against the people who taught me that. The only thing that I could do is pray. I hope that they'll understand. I hope one day they would also have the chance to listen to the biblical teachings upheld by the Church.



When I joined the *Iglesia Ni Cristo*, I felt the tranquility and guidance that I have long been yearning for. What I understood was that there was something that God wanted to tell all men, and finally I have received that pure instruction. I tell myself and reflect, "So this is what You wanted me to do. This is the manner of worship that You want us to do? I'm sorry that it's only now that I learned about it. But from now on since I have come to know these, I will follow what You want me to do."

I can't measure how grateful I am because my life, my salvation, is on the line. I'm so grateful that I learned about the *Iglesia Ni Cristo* and the pristine instructions of our Lord God. He wants to help us, to love us, and to always guide us. There's just one thing that He is asking from us—to follow His commands, His will. Now whatever may happen, even if my family goes through struggles and challenges, it feels different because I am at peace and undisturbed. As long as I, together with my family, follow the will of God, we are certain that He will listen to our every prayer. When we hear lessons from the Bible that the Church Administration prepared for us, we are reminded that we should not give in to sadness nor depression. We should overcome these because we are the children of God. We should not worry about anything.

The faith I have received through my Church membership gave me the understanding that our Lord God will not forsake His chosen people.

I hope other people, especially my loved ones, can see how my family continuously serves and worships God, in the same way that they see how my family lives a peaceful life. And I hope through this, they become encouraged to listen to the biblical teachings upheld by the *Iglesia Ni Cristo*.

To my family, my friends, especially, we invite you all to listen to the biblical teachings of the *Iglesia Ni Cristo*, to read the *Pasugo: God's Message* magazines we give out, or tune in to our programs on TV or radio. We hope you take time to examine the biblical lessons upheld by the *Iglesia Ni Cristo*. And I hope that you, too, will come to the same conclusion that I did, that there is something that God wants us to do. I hope you can give yourselves an opportunity to hear these instructions from our Lord God. ●



Features

Special gathering highlights CEBSI's 55th anniversary

By RONNIE H. MUTYA

THE RELIGIOUS BROADCAST ARM of the Iglesia Ni Cristo (Church Of Christ), the Christian Era Broadcasting Service International, Inc. (CEBSI) was established on February 10, 1969 and it currently operates INC Radio and INCTV. CEBSI's 55th anniversary this year was highlighted by a special gathering held on February 16, 2024. Brother Angelo Eraño V. Manalo, CEBSI President and CEO, officiated at the momentous occasion at the house of worship of the Local Congregation of Luzon Avenue, Ecclesiastical District of Central, Philippines.

The event was attended by CEBSI's management, staff, crew, as well as ministers, ministerial workers, and volunteer workers, together with their loved ones, who altogether offered praises and thanks to the Lord God for His blessings and guidance to the said organization throughout the years.

From the host site, the sacred occasion was streamed live to various remote sites in other ecclesiastical districts in the Philippines and abroad where more brethren, especially those who are part of their respective district multimedia, were gathered.

In his Bible-based sermon, Brother Angelo Eraño Manalo emphasized the importance of God's people being actively involved and

constantly improving themselves in all aspects of the duties entrusted to them by God. This is achievable if members of the Church remain active in obeying God's commandments and exhortations written in the Bible.

Sister Kate Russel Mabale, INC News correspondent from Cubao Congregation, shared that the lesson resonated well with her. "As a Church member and officer, I should be a good example to everyone, especially to my fellow brethren. So, I need to make sure that my behavior reflects and confirms my relationship with God."

"God gave me this duty of which I'm deeply grateful for," expressed Sister Chris Antonette Pugay, South Korea District multimedia director. "I'll ensure to always develop the skills expected of me as I fulfill my duty. Most importantly, I should set a good example to my fellow brethren in the district multimedia in being obedient to God."

Zamboanga del Sur District multimedia adviser, Brother Romy Coveta, conveyed, "The task given to me by God is a manifestation of His love. Thus, I'd like to reciprocate that by being responsible and committed.



May God continue to provide me the strength and qualities that I need in the performance of my duties."

"In this world that we live in, there are so many things that may cause sadness to us. We are so thankful to God because, through the guidance of the Church Administration, CEBSI is being instrumental in uplifting our well-being and morale so that we can uphold our membership in the Church until the end," said Brother Christian Gumabon, a minister of the gospel from the CEBSI Administration.

Six days prior to the special gathering, on the very day of CEBSI's anniversary, the INCRadio, under the guidance of its present station manager, Brother Arnel Solano, held a three-pronged activity at the EVM Convention Center (EVMCC) along Central Avenue, New Era, Quezon City, Philippines.

At the lobby of the EVMCC, a photo exhibit showcased the important milestones of the INCRadio, formerly known as DZEM, from its humble beginnings (terrestrial or normal audio broadcast) to its current advanced broadcasting (visual radio, called "teleradyo" in the country, and livestreaming) from its 67 satellite studios around the world.

Later that day, an Awards Night was held to recognize the top-performing programs of the INCRadio and the talents and staff members of its main studio who exemplified excellence in and dedication to their respective duties. From the main site, at the EVMCC's Eraño G. Manalo (EGM) Hall, the entire event was streamed live on INCRadio's YouTube account.

In his opening remarks, Brother Arnel Solano expressed his gratitude to Brother Eduardo V. Manalo, the Executive Minister, and

Brother Angelo Eraño Manalo, for their valuable support to the station and all its activities.

In between the presentation of awards, musical numbers presented by the talented brethren of INCRadio featured stories inspired by the themes of faith, love, and hope promoted by the programs it broadcasts.

Brother Edwil Zabala, a minister of the gospel, delivered the closing remarks.

Moreover, on February 10, the INCTV held for the first time the INC News Awards to give recognition to those who excelled in certain aspects of news broadcast, including members of the district multimedia in different parts of the world.

The said event that took place at the EVMCC's Glicerio B. Santos (GBS) Jr. Hall, which was part of CEBSI's anniversary celebration, was also witnessed through videoconferencing by other brethren gathered in various remote sites.

"I feel humbled, thankful, and blessed," expressed Sister Ericka Celestino, INC News correspondent from Great Britain Ecclesiastical District, who received the Best Correspondent Award (Europe Category). She considered the award a sweet surprise because, she said, "When I perform my duties, I don't expect that anyone would notice. I am performing my task in the Church to give honor and glory to our Almighty God."

On behalf of the news anchors and program hosts, and those from the production and technical team, Brother Rex Salvador, section chief of the INC News, conveyed, "We thank our beloved Executive Minister, Brother Eduardo Manalo, for entrusting to us the duty of delivering news on the various activities of the Church to many people. We also thank Brother Angelo Eraño Manalo for guiding us as well." ②



Ang Tanging Lunas

Ang ulap ay dagim na kimkim ay unos,
Ay bantà na lagim ang sigwang may poot!
Kaabang naman, salab ng hilakbot;
Magpapabitak, sa lupa'y tutuyot!

Ang hangin ay ágos na hasik ay lason,
May pukól na gimbal ang singaw at simoy!
May láaw ng sindak, may tákot ang taghoy
Ng parang at lungsod na saklot ng siklon!

Dahuyong ang dagat, warí'y nagngangalit:
Umaalimbukáy sa alon at putik!
Dinambong ng layós ang pintua't silid,
Ragasang ang dala'y pagtangis at hindik!

Sa s'yudad, sa bukid, may amba na tabak!
May salot, may hamok, may gútom, may iyak!
Ang usok ng digma'y hindi naaampat!
Kahit saang dako'y may luha, may dahas!

Ngiunit maupo man sa gitna ng dilim,
At sumasakal man ang kamay ng libing!
Kahit di mapatid ang luha't panimdim
Ay may pag-asa pa, sa Kanya titingin!

Kahít sa silungán, hayop ay matumba,
Kahit ang pananim ay di namumunga;
Ang hangin, ang laot, may tangká mang dala,
Ay may tatanawing bulkal ng pag-asa!

Pagkat walang luha na di malálagot,
Pagkat walang sakít na di magagamot!
Lupa ma'y mayanig, gumuho ma'y bundok,
Lakas ng bisig N'ya'y hindi mauubos!

Ang Ama ang tanging lunas at pag-asa;
Siya ang kanlungan saanman at t'wina!
Siya ay silungán ng nangungulila,
Siya ay kublihan sa hirap at dusa!

Siya'y paglingkuran, sa Kanya sumunod;
Ipadarama N'ya'y kagandahang loob!
Siya ay sambahin, papurihang taós;
Papalisín Niya ang pangamba't takot!

Ang Diyos ay lapitan, sa Kanya tumawag;
Siya ay tutugon! S'ya ang tanging lunas!

EZZARD R. GILBANG
QUEZON CITY, PHILIPPINES

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